

JUDGMENT CALL
IN SARAJEVO P.22

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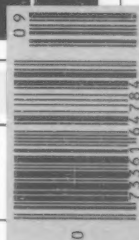
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RIGHT, FAIR,
AND DECENT"

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1961



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LETTERS

STARMAN STARTLED!

As I circled the wagons and dug Abe Rosenthal's poison arrows out of my hide during all the hoopla over Gennifer Flowers and Bill Clinton, I wondered what you guys would say about our coverage of the story. I must confess I expected another elitist crucifixion.

Then, wonder of wonders, I read Christopher Lydon's "Sex, War, and Death: Covering Clinton Became a Test of Character — for the Press" (CJR, May/June), and damn near wept. Thank you for what I consider complete vindication. We said the emperor had no clothes — and we were right. Except the emperor wasn't only Governor Clinton; it was the holier-than-thou mainstream media on whose parade (and candidate) we rained. We made a fine target for cheap-shot artists, but history will prove we did the right thing.

RICHARD KAPLAN

EDITOR

STAR MAGAZINE

TARRYTOWN, N.Y.

BRILL BLASTS BACK

I was puzzled to read your Dart about me in the July/August CJR ["for a prima facie case of cruel and unusual punishment"].

When I first saw it a chill ran through me. What ethical breach (the usual, and appropriate, Dart offense) had I committed? Then, when I saw that you had taken me to task for making our reporters and editors accountable not only for making a mistake (a minor offense), but for covering up in print the nature of the mistake, I assumed that your typesetter had simply put Dart where Laurel belonged.

After all, isn't CJR dedicated, above all, to the idea that journalists should be as accountable as the people they write about? Please tell me, and your readers, if it was just a typo. Or, if you really believe that it is "cruel and unusual punishment" for us journalists who make a living naming other people who've made mistakes and then cover them up (either inadvertently or deliberately) to name journalists when they make mistakes.

Yes, we insist on candid and clear correc-

tions (and, yes, if we make a mistake on page one, we correct it on page one), and we like to name our reporters or editors who've made a mistake — a policy I began when I named myself for having made a particularly dumb, careless error in an article. If that's Dart-worthy, then you're just a special interest publication for journalists, not a magazine dedicated to journalistic accountability.

What you call "cruel and unusual punishment" is the "punishment" that all of us proudly dole out to those we write about every day. Think about it.

STEVEN BRILL

PRESIDENT

AMERICAN LAWYER MEDIA, L.P.

NEW YORK, N.Y.

Wait a minute: Steven Brill gets a Dart because he published a conspicuous, detailed correction naming names of newspaper staffers who goofed up? No way — it's a Laurel for that one.

As a former Brill employee, I always thought he was way out in front of the rest of the journalistic pack when it came to his company's corrections policy. Your item demonstrates a typical attitude: you are terribly solicitous of the (rightly) embarrassed editors, but show no concern for readers who were misinformed or lawyers who were misidentified. What you call a "public flogging" might actually accomplish what so few corrections do: bring to the public's attention the fact that an error was made and light a fire under reporters and editors to get

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it right next time.

HOLLY ENGLISH
MONTCLAIR, N.J.

Editor's note: *Mr. Brill's page-one correction — the target of the Dart — appeared in the San Francisco Recorder, which had misidentified a lawyer in a previous story and had then run an inadequate "clarification."* Peter Scheer, editor and publisher of the Recorder, responded to Brill's correction with the following memo, addressed to "All Editorial People," and headed "Re: Corrections:"

Last Friday Steve Brill circulated to all AmLaw Media edit staff a short memo discussing a rather unusual — to put it mildly — page-one correction that ran in *The Recorder* the previous Wednesday. (The memo included a copy of the correction.) Because I was on vacation all last week, I did not see the memo until today. A response is in order.

No one disputes that Steve was right on the merits: the original news item contained an error; rather than come clean with a straightforward correction, we published a "clarification" that might better have been captioned an "obfuscation"; a breakdown in procedures allowed this item to get into the paper without my review.

A prominently placed mea culpa was certainly called for — and, in fact, one was in the process of being written when Steve became involved. The additional steps that Steve then took were, however, pure overkill.

There was no justification for humiliating employees of this paper by naming, in the correction, the people responsible for the mistakes (particularly in the case of the person who made the original reporting error, which, while significant, was not different in kind from the mistakes made every week in this company by hard-working and honest reporters). And there was no justification for taking punitive action, in the form of suspension, against one of our editors.

Steve made his point, to be sure. It probably will have its intended in terrorem effect throughout the company. And it was also a brilliant p.r. move, transforming an embarrassment into a glowing statement of editorial policy. But in his apparent disregard of the impact his actions could have on the affected employees, Steve went too far.

MIRACLE MAX, IN 3-D

Robert Maxwell, the subject of D.D. Guttenplan's article ("Miracle Max" and the Marveling Media," *CJR*, May/June), was no doubt a rogue and a scoundrel who should

have been promptly exposed by hard-working journalists. But Guttenplan leaves out some background that may help to explain why he was spared.

Maxwell saved the *Daily News* from certain death at the hands of the Tribune Company, its prior owner. Compared to Tribune, Maxwell seemed to be both a savior and a saint. Did he shuffle assets among his British companies? Tribune had taken away the *News's* landmark building, turned it into a separate profit center, sold it to itself, kept the proceeds — and then charged the *News* rent in a building that had been built and fully paid for with *News* profits. Tribune was widely believed to have looted the *News* (see the classic piece in the June 1991 *NewsInc.*, Sheryl Fragin's "Legacy Lost") by overcharging it for substandard newsprint, stripping it of assets, and renegeing on promised investments.

Did Maxwell underpay his writers, as the *Post* charged? *Post* writers were working for four days' pay at the time. Maxwell never asked for wage cuts. More important, the Tribune Company, with zero provocation, had tried to break The Newspaper Guild, a wholly inoffensive union. Maxwell showed up and treated union leaders with sympathy and dignity. Further, he made it obvious that he was interested in running a newspaper in

**Everyday, irregardless of his homework,
Jeffrey went "rollerblading" because it
was to nice to lay around with his nose
in a english book.**

Of the seven errors in this headline, the use of "rollerblading" as a verb strikes us as the most extreme. Rollerblade® is a brand name. It is, also, technically incorrect to use "rollerblader" and "rollerblades" as nouns. Remember, the careful writer skates on in-line skates known as Rollerblade® skates.



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New York City, a goal the Tribune Company never accepted with any enthusiasm.

Maxwell further came well-recommended. Much of the bad press he got in England was dismissed as the British establishment's rejection of a foreign-born, Jewish "counter-jumper." In New York, Lazard Freres assured us he was financially sound. Governor Cuomo told us we would love this flamboyant character. "He's bigger than life, he's got an ego, you can't trust him — he's a perfect New Yorker," Cuomo said. Senator Pat Moynihan, who had been Maxwell's

neighbor in the 1960s in Boston, was similarly enthusiastic. Maxwell's guide throughout the purchase of the *News* was former senator and White House chief of staff Howard Baker, who lent his integrity to Maxwell's American ventures. And Maxwell was an enemy of Rupert Murdoch.

It is certainly true that Maxwell would have been more deeply investigated had he been an American, unprotected by British libel laws. But it is 20-20 hindsight to say that we should all have perceived him as a scoundrel the moment he hit our shores. At the time, in comparison to the Tribune

Company he looked like a positive nobleman. Come to think of it, in comparison to the Tribune Company, he still does.

LARS-ERIK NELSON
BROOKMONT, MD.

Editor's note: *Nelson is Washington bureau chief of the New York Daily News.*

UNGER CONTRA NEWSWEEK

In his critique of the way I use sources like Israeli intelligence agent Ari Ben-Menashe, *Newsweek's* Rich Thomas (Letters, *CJR*, July/August) misstates my case, misses the point, and makes the same mistake *Newsweek* has consistently made in its coverage of the October Surprise allegations.

Thomas writes from the fallacious and naive assumption that we live in a world in which truth-tellers always tell the truth and liars always lie. Life isn't that simple, and if investigative reporters or government investigators operated from that assumption, we might as well not bother at all.

Take the cases of John Gotti, Manuel Noriega, or, for that matter, Watergate. In each, key sources were deeply flawed and had suspect motives for talking. Salvatore Gravano, who snitched on Gotti, murdered nineteen men. Yet his testimony turned out to be the key to finding out what Gotti was really up to.

For a reporter, the key question is what really happened. For that you need sources who are knowledgeable — and that may mean spies, con men, Mafiosi, and the like. That doesn't mean trusting them. But it does mean hearing them out and rigorously trying to corroborate or refute their stories.

Newsweek, of course, has a different m.o., as I found out in the two months I worked there on the magazine's October Surprise investigation. In the case of Ben-Menashe, personnel records from Israeli Military Intelligence and thousands of documents concerning arms sales prove that he was far more than a "low-level translator" — the cover story put out by Israeli officials that *Newsweek* credulously accepted. In addition, the former chief of staff to Israeli Military Intelligence, Moshe Hevrony, told me that Ben-Menashe "served directly under me" and had access to "very, very sensitive material."

The fact that Ben-Menashe has lied shouldn't surprise anyone who had dealt with the intelligence world. Of course, spies lie; that's what they do for a living. The larger point is that it is indisputable that Ben-Menashe knows some of the greatest secrets in the intelligence world, many of which have been corroborated by highly reliable sources. He leaked Iran-contra to reporters six months before the story broke

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The Wall Street Journal, for a five-part series of articles, "Mutual Funds: Getting the Most For Your Money," that provided readers with jargon-free advice on how to make intelligent selections among the thousands of available mutual funds.

Neil Downing

The Providence Journal-Bulletin, for his column "Crisis Line" which appeared three times weekly to answer readers' questions on public issues that arose when Rhode Island's governor in early 1991 closed 45 of the state's banks and credit unions and created problems for more than 300,000 depositors.

Janet Bodnar and Melynda Dovel Wilcox

Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine, for "When Your Health Insurance Makes You Sick," an article concerning the problems involved with collecting on health insurance claims. The article examined five case histories and offered strategies for cutting through the masses of red tape involved with claims.

Jack Kahn and staff reporters

The Nightly Business Report, a production of NBR Enterprises/WPBT-TV, Miami, FL, which is carried on 260 public TV stations across the nation, for "Retirement Planning," a special report making the case that members of the "baby boom" generation may not enjoy the same benefits as current retirees, and therefore urging them to begin saving and investing now and offering "how to" information.

The annual awards presented by the ICI Education Foundation of the Investment Company Institute and the American University recognize excellence in reporting on personal finance and money management. The Awards are made for reporting which examines, explains and illuminates the often complex and confusing issues and choices that confront American consumers in matters of personal finance. For information on the 1993 competition, please contact Louis Kohlmeier at American University, 202/855-6167, or Erick Kanter at the Investment Company Institute, 202/955-3531.



ICI EDUCATION
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in 1986. He revealed the Iraqi arms pipeline more than a year before it became public. He's made startling allegations about massive illicit arms deals that have been corroborated by Secretary of State James Baker and congressional investigations. His charge that William Casey was meeting with Israeli intelligence officials more than a year before Casey became head of the CIA has been confirmed by General Yehoshua Saguy, former director of Israeli Military Intelligence.

Newsweek was aware of some of these allegations and the fact that they were corroborated, but did not bother to print that. Instead, it bought official denials.

CRAIG UNGER
NEW YORK, N.Y.

SO NEAR AND YET ...

Re the caption on page 25 of the July/August issue, which calls San Jose "nearby" to Los Angeles: Los Angeles is about 350 miles, as the car drives, or 300, as the crow flies, from San Jose.

Shall I address this to you in Manhattan or in nearby Richmond, Virginia?

TODD GITLIN

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY, CALIF.

DANGER ZONE

After reading "Get The Hell Out of Here!" (CJR, July/August), about the Los Angeles riots, I felt compelled to write.

As a free-lance photographer from Oakland, California, who has covered violent news stories, I can tell you that photographing violence has increasingly become a part of doing the job here. As any reporter can tell you, if you cover Bay Area News, you *will* eventually cover one of the fairly regular Berkeley "riots." Although these aren't on the scale of the one in Los Angeles, the ingredients are always the same: fires, innocent people injured, property destroyed, and reporters attacked.

Several years ago I photographed my first Berkeley riot on assignment from a local paper. Crowds had assembled as part of a "People's Park" demonstration and things gradually got out of hand. I saw someone throw a trash can through a plate-glass window of a nearby store and mobs start to loot. I saw others turn over a fire-department vehicle and torch it with a Molotov cocktail. Then I noticed a great photo opportunity brewing: a protester was preparing to do a flying kick through a plate-glass window. I situated myself nearby and snapped a couple of frames as he and the window collided and then, before I knew it, I was blindsided. POW! Some guy had knocked my camera out of my hand and it shattered as it hit the

cement. He said, "Get the f--- out of here, man!" I was terrified, of course, and after I got over my anger at the destruction of my camera I realized I could have been seriously injured. Ever since then, I've been extremely cautious when shooting urban unrest.

The bottom line is this: I was naive and not very familiar with shooting spot news. The reporters who covered the riots in L.A. should have known they were playing with dynamite. I'm thankful for their eyewitness reporting, but they could have used common sense. It's dangerous! What made them

think that their press passes would provide them with any degree of safety? What did they expect? It was a riot, not a city council meeting.

Don't get me wrong. These are my colleagues. I'm never happy when I hear of anyone being attacked or beaten. For those colleagues who were assigned to cover the riots, I am sympathetic. For those who have covered violent outbreaks before (in their own backyards or around the world) and were injured, I can understand how they thought that they could have dealt with the situation. But for those overzealous reporters

AMERICANS B E H I N D BARS

The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world. With more than one million people in our jails and prisons, we now spend over \$20 billion a year to construct facilities and manage inmates. Yet this growth in prisons and prisoners has not made our streets safer.

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and spot news junkies who never get enough and got hurt, consider yourself educated. This is dangerous business and you can't operate with impunity during a riot.

BRIAN BARTON
OAKLAND, CALIF

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Carol Bradley Shirley's excellent piece on journalists, racism, and the Los Angeles riots ("Where Have You Been?" *CJR*, July/August) treats an earlier generation of newspaper people far more kindly than we deserve.

If my own experience on the (pre-Watergate) *Washington Post* of the late 1940s and early '50s was typical, and I suspect that it was, we were just as much "a part of the establishment" (Shirley's words) as today's crop.

In those days there was a squawk box at the front of the *Post* newsroom. It picked up police radio transmissions. It was monitored with some care by young reporters like me, and by the city desk. If a shooting was reported, we'd listen for the locale. "That's black," somebody would mutter (Washington's ghetto then was explosively small). No reporter, no photographer. Dick Lyons, my friend at the adjacent desk, once muttered: "They bleed, too, you know."

"Today," Shirley writes, "we wear three-piece suits and carry briefcases and drive in from the suburbs." In my *Post* beginnings, we men wore suits, neckties, white shirts, and sometimes even lugged briefcases. We did have one black reporter, pretty revolutionary for those days. The *Post*'s reporter-editor crew commuted almost exclusively from all-white northwest Washington, or from Maryland-Virginia suburbs. My own home was in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Such was life more than forty years ago. What else is new?

DON OLESEN
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

CREATIVITY VS. ACCURACY

Re "The Overtime Wars," (*CJR*, July/August), a remarkably clear benchmark for the kind of journalistic work that should be exempt from overtime rules was provided by the Court of Appeals in Washington when it reversed the opinion of Judge Gesell in the first trial of *Sherwood v. Washington Post*. The court held that "a person's job is 'professional' by virtue of being original or creative only when the original or creative aspects constitute the primary or predominant functions of the job" (emphasis in original). At the trial of *Freeman v. NBC* (at

which the two other plaintiffs and I acted as our own lawyers), all of the network's expert witnesses conceded on cross-examination that, in the work performed by television newswriters, creativity must be regarded as less important than accuracy.

JACK FREEMAN
RIDGEWOOD, N.J.

WAY TO GO!

Kudos to Don Hewitt for urging reporters to get out of the debates ("Shaking Up the 'Great Debates,'" *CJR*, May/June).

We've increasingly done just that in Connecticut, using a format pioneered by the state League of Women Voters, the *Courant*, and Connecticut Public Television. We call it the "cumulative-time" format. The moderator suggests topics and invites candidates to discuss, rebut, debate as they wish. We run a stopwatch on each candidate when speaking, and insist that before the debate is over — not on each topic — they will have used approximately equal time. A gentle reminder to the one who's taking too much time is usually enough to achieve self-restraint. The result is robust debate.

DON NOEL
POLITICAL COLUMNIST,
THE HARTFORD COURANT
HARTFORD, CONN

STAYS OF EXECUTION

Re: "Death Watch: A Night in the Gas Chamber" (*CJR*, July/August), convicted killer Robert Alton Harris received four stays of execution the night of his death, not three as reported in *CJR*.

The first stay from the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals came around 6:30 P.M. Monday, April 20, the second at 10:15 P.M., the third at 12:08 A.M. Tuesday, April 21, and the final stay came at 4:01 A.M.

All were lifted by the U.S. Supreme Court. In its last order the court took the unprecedented step of barring any further rulings by stating: "No further stays of Robert Alton Harris' execution shall be entered by the federal appeals court except upon order of this court."

DION NISSENBAUM
UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
SAN FRANCISCO BUREAU

CLARIFICATION: An editing change in "That Special Perspective They Say They Want" (*CJR*, July/August) left the impression that of the *Los Angeles Times*'s 118-person metro staff only four were black. At the time of the riots, there were seventy-four reporters on the metro staff, four of whom were black. Since then two black reporters have been added, and a weekly community news section for central Los Angeles is being launched this month.

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CAMPAIGN COVERAGE

A WALK THROUGH THE GARDEN

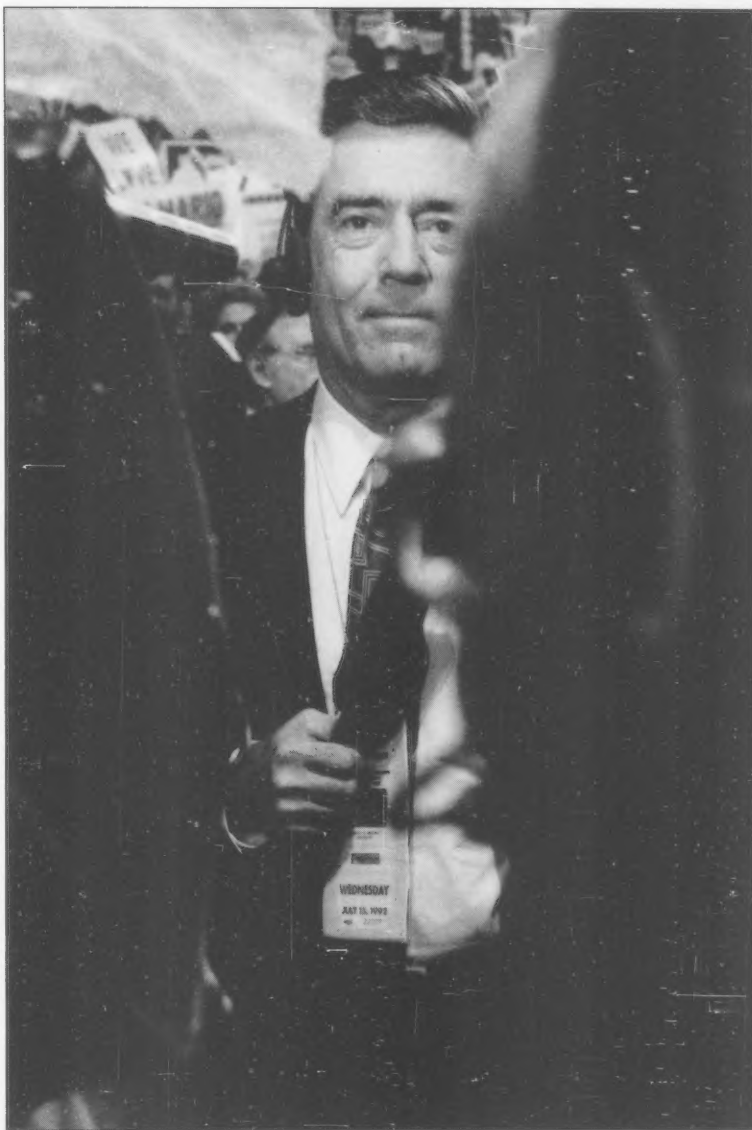
BY CHRISTOPHER LYDON

New York, N.Y. — We have seen the future, and it almost works. We've seen the auto-launch of a no-party candidacy on CNN's *Larry King Live*. We've seen the *Donahue* show dominate the discourse in a New York primary. We've seen the incredible shrinking soundbite on network news transformed into the run-on chatter of talk shows, and we've seen the *Today* show and other morning "news" programs turn themselves over to candidates and callers. We've seen and heard an almost-nominee playing a midnight saxophone on *Arsenio Hall*. We've seen Arsenio and other late-night comedians become the most quoted of commentators. And we're seeing the Comedy Channel and MTV cover a party convention.

That's what is new about '92. And now suddenly Ross Perot has withdrawn from the race. By the old definition, the only "news" of the Democrats' slick and surprise-proof convention in New York is Perot's self-immolation in Dallas, a thousand miles away. In Madison Square Garden I imagine I am hearing a collective sigh of relief from the news stables: our confrontation with the extraterrestrial and his twenty-first century media has been postponed. A suggestion of the old order has been restored.

I ask Sam Donaldson in the dugout on the perimeter of the convention

Christopher Lydon — news broadcaster at WGBH, public television in Boston — covered two presidential campaigns for The New York Times.



Ira Friedlander

floor: Are the reporters disappointed that the Perot story is disappearing, or are they relieved that an alien invader has veered away from our planet? "For us," Donaldson says, with courtly flourish, "it doesn't matter. Presidential candidates and presidents themselves come and go. But," he intones, seeming to mock his words with his grandiloquence, "the press goes on forever." Sam has been fretting off-camera about the want of news at this convention and

Dan Rather reporting from the convention floor. What were we all doing there?

the irrelevance of the coverage. His network, ABC, thought of staying away.

The NBC encampment is in a mini-trailer park on Thirty-first Street, across from the Garden. Sensible John Chancellor speaks with the recklessness of a man in sight of retirement. "It just occurred to me that in these straitened

PAUL MILLER

WASHINGTON REPORTING FELLOWSHIPS

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SCHEDULE Applications are due January 15, 1993. Winners are announced in February 1993. Classes start in April 1993.

LOCATION Many of the sessions will be held at The Freedom Forum World Center, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va.; others will take place on Capitol Hill.

FACULTY The sessions will be led by Washington reporters, analysts, public-affairs specialists, lobbyists, and others.

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AFFILIATION The Paul Miller Washington Reporting Fellowships are an operating program of The Freedom Forum of Arlington, Va.



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Ira Friedlander

Cokie Roberts, (above) reports in the "Old News" mode for ABC, while (right) Comedy Channel's Joy Behar chats with Al Sharpton and (far right) talk show host Rush Limbaugh visits with William Bennett and Paul Weyrich.

times for a lot of journalistic institutions, some of them are going to say, 'Wow, Perot's out: that saves us a third of our budget.' I don't know if it's being said here or not, but it wouldn't surprise me, given the record of GE."

Chancellor has been celebrating Perot's exposure of American discontent and of the rotten low-turnout primary game, and he mourns Perot's passing accordingly. But, sitting there in Chancellor's camper, I am wondering more about Perot's parallel challenge to traditional journalism. Perot's message about media was that we don't need reporters, we don't need networks; we need one guy who makes sense to the American people, who can answer him directly on a 1-800 number.

"I think the 800 number was less threatening to people like me," Chancellor says, "than the willingness of talk shows and network programs like the *Today* show, like *CBS Morning News*, like *ABC Good Morning America*, to turn over large blocks of their news-coverage time to non-journalists. And the candidates obviously love this. I think journalism was getting



it in the neck at this point, and I think that may be the one lasting effect of the Perot candidacy. I think Clinton is pretty well committed to going on these programs. President Bush has done only one of them so far, aside from a long interview with *MacNeill/Lehrer*. What shall we call this stuff — the Unquestioning Media? The Easy Media? It is going to be very attractive, and the broadcast producers I have talked to like it because it makes the ratings go up. So that you have a nice combination of commercial success and candidates wanting to do this, and guys like me are left standing outside, somewhere near the gutter. And I think the Republic will survive," he adds, a little dubiously.

On the second day of the convention, Russell Baker's column in *The New York Times* begins ominously: "It becomes harder and harder for press and television to play any role in presidential politics that is not utterly contemptible." Reporters can be a self-hating lot, but when our first humorist gets this angry we're in real trouble. From

**Is instant burnout
built into a
Larry King launch?
I wonder. "I got him
up," King says.
"What did I do to get
him down? Nuttin'."**

the party conventions of the '50s and '60s, Russ Baker's running commentaries gave a Mencken touch to the *Times*'s coverage, but he has been boycotting these events since 1972, when it was revealed that Richard Nixon had scripted every demonstration, every wave from Pat Nixon, to the second. The only way to watch these things, Baker decided, is on television, at a distance. And still he is furious this morning, "watching the ridiculously vast herd of journalists idling over this week's non-story in New York while

the rest of the world is forgotten."

Maureen Dowd of the *Times* remarks that Richard Ben Cramer's epic *What It Takes*, about the 1988 campaign, is being celebrated by Washington reporters, who've mostly read excerpts. "The pack has suddenly decided that it must be brilliant because it trashes the pack. I mean, that's a good indication of the level of self-loathing among reporters."

In fact, most of the vast herd of journalists at the Garden — three media people for every delegate — feel worse than ridiculous. Why are we here? Michael Kinsley of *The New Republic*, who spars with John Sununu on CNN's *Crossfire*, says, "What struck me about this convention is, as the actual news value goes down, the number of TV cameras goes up. You can't move on the floor. And when I went down on the floor with Sununu he practically got mugged. Not so much by angry Democrats as by TV people looking for news. There was no news."

All of us seem to be suffering various symptoms of institutional decline. In particular, the big three networks, which

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used to own or at least host these conventions, are broke and have cut back their coverage to as little as an hour a night. And even then they cannot hold an audience. On Monday night, *The Revenge of the Nerds, Part III* on Fox Television had more viewers than the convention coverage of CBS, NBC, or ABC. Baseball's All-Star Game on CBS wiped out the convention audience on Tuesday.

As long as Perot was in the race, all the reporters and interpreters of presidential politics wondered if they were elephants on the way to the boneyard. Dinosaurs confronted a moment like this, and quill copyists in medieval monasteries in the fifteenth century, facing Gutenberg and his printing press. But it is not just Perot who threatens us. "Clinton will go over our heads, too, with his saxophone," says Daniel Schorr of National Public Radio. "Everybody goes over our heads now. They've discovered there are things on television other than news programs. It's a big discovery!"

If the rise of Ross Perot this spring and summer, on his own electronic bootstraps, implied that the political press, as we'd known it, was irrelevant, one could also make the case that the rise of Bill Clinton (to about the same pinnacle by early July) implied that the political press is omnipotent. Here's the case to pick a fight with: that the elite press launched Clinton around Christmas-time (when Mario Cuomo bowed out), that the newsmagazines packaged him, the networks marketed him, the tabloids test-crashed him, the newspapers recalled and restored him. And now, full circle, here is Sidney Blumenthal in *The New Republic*, who "anointed" Clinton in February, reintroducing Clinton as "The Reanointed" in *TNR*'s Democratic Convention Special.

The ordeal with Gennifer Flowers and the "character issue" was redemptive, Blumenthal writes: "The figure who takes governing seriously is what the country wants but has had trouble seeing in Clinton. Now his nomination testifies to his perseverance, highlighting a morality tale that tells itself."

Blumenthal has taken some lumps for his advocacy. Howell Raines, the chief

"When reporters go around criticizing reporters who refuse to cheerlead," Howell Raines tells me, "that's unhealthy."

of *The New York Times*'s Washington bureau, says he made it a main job to warn against and protect his younger campaign reporters from the "Conformity Cops," specifically Blumenthal and Joe Klein of *New York* magazine and, since the spring, of *Newsweek*. "When reporters go around campaign planes criticizing reporters who refuse to cheerlead," Raines tells me, "that's unhealthy. That's part of what we've seen this year."

Blumenthal is vulnerable also because he has fallen in love before — with Gary Hart in 1984, with Richard Gephardt and to a lesser extent with Michael Dukakis in 1988. Yet he sounds, when writing about Clinton, not at all like a camp follower. He is a power in his own right by now — the corresponding secretary of "The Conversation," the term he invented last winter to describe the network of pats and policy mavens who cast Clinton as *their* candidate.

"You know," Blumenthal remarks, "Americans like the conceit that there is no such thing as elites. Cultural elite is a bad word; it's something people campaign against. But it's a part of democratic politics. And so is elite journalism."

Whoever else has been dealt out of the media game, *The New Republic* has been dealt in. Editor-in-chief Martin Peretz taught vice-presidential nominee Al Gore at Harvard in the 1960s and advocated him for president in 1988. Gore's major paper under Professor Peretz's tutelage, Blumenthal reports, was on the influence of television in a political campaign.

Joe Klein has signed on with CBS as well as *Newsweek* to expound on the Clinton phenomenon. He is a hot item

at this convention, and still burning, I discover, at being suspected (even by me, in *CJR*) of press-agentry. The collapse of parties means that media make the candidates, he instructs me. "Our job is to report what we see. When I went in October to Winnisquam High School in New Hampshire and saw Bob Kerrey and Bill Clinton address the same kids on successive days, and Bob Kerrey did a standard stump speech that kind of fizzled, and Bill Clinton invigorated the class and got a standing ovation, I said: 'Well, maybe something's going on here.' Now that's what reporters do, and that's how these candidacies get known."

"Traditional press?" In the CNN trailer off-stage at Madison Square Garden, Larry King is full of himself, and incredulous. "You still wouldn't have heard of Bill Clinton! Bill Clinton is a product of television. *The New Republic*? How many people read *The New Republic*?"

"Why is Bush decreasing? He looks skittish, he looks nervous, he looks erratic. I can't read that. I see that. It's

all moot. Television is the most important media in the world, and *everything* else is a distant second. A *distant* second. If you're good on television, we don't matter. *The New York Times* don't matter. And if you're not good, you're dead. David Duke? Not good. Dead. Slick, phony, goodbye, history."

What makes Clinton good? I ask.

"He grows on you. He's a fighter. He hangs tough. He goes on *Arsenio*. He goes to the hunt. That's impressive. People like that."

What makes Perot good?

"Of all the billionaires — and I've known about eight billionaires — I've never seen anyone touch people like he does. Ted Turner does, too," he gushes unblushingly about his boss. "When Ted Turner walks into a building, the guy washing the windows feels on an equal level with him. Perot has the same thing."

We are chatting on the last day of the undeclared Perot candidacy that Larry King midwived on live television. Perot is plummeting in the polls and the press, but Larry King is bullish. "I think that's

a natural dip," he says. "There is so much discontent in America that if he started spending money, livened it up, had a frame of issues, picked a good vice-president, we're going down to election day in a three-man race."

An hour later I remember the question I'd meant to ask Larry King about the deadly hazard of his chummy interview journalism, what John Chancellor and others might call the Easy Media of politics: What if your subject is lying? The next afternoon, Perot is out of the race — no matter that he had told King flatly that if his name made the ballot in fifty states, he would run. Larry King is shaken but cordial. "We never know," he says. "In a case like Perot, I'm sure everything he says, he believes. So who's lying? I mean, Bush believes what he says. Bush is suddenly calling all the Perot people and telling them he loved them. Did he love them yesterday? I can't say he didn't."

Is instant burnout built into a Larry King launch? I wonder.

"I got him up," King says. "What did I do to get him down? I had nuttin' to

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do with it."

To have read Jon Katz's prophetic (or cautionary) essay on the Old News and the New News (*Rolling Stone*, March 5) is to take a fresh view of this convention and all the campaign coverage. The Old News, as Katz categorized the network shows and the metropolitan papers in general, is about institutions and far-away politics; it is delivered by white men to a shrinking audience, and it's "pooped, confused, and broke." The New News — "fearless, frightening, and powerful" — is defined by sensibility more than technology: it is mostly the pop media, including music and movies, where Americans, especially those under thirty-five, hear a real-life resonance with their economic anxiety (Bruce Springsteen), their racial anger (Ice Cube, Public Enemy), their sexual conflicts (Oprah Winfrey, *Thelma and Louise*). In movies like *JFK* and TV shows like *Murphy Brown*, Katz argued, the New News is "seizing the functions of mainstream journalism, sparking conversations and setting the country's social and political agenda."

What I am noticing is that it takes Old News/New News bifocals to see all that is going on here

What I am noticing is that some New News sensibility has bled into Old News reporting, and that it takes Old News/New News bifocals to see all that is going on here. For example, the double resonance in Al Gore's opening line — that he always wanted to be the warm-up act for Elvis: it referred to Bill Clinton's Elvis imitation — an Old News item — but also to the New News event of the year, the huge popular vote this spring on the Elvis stamp.

"Here's how they're using the New News," Katz observes of the convention he's been studying on four TV sets at home in New Jersey. "There is no

quicker way to signal people under forty that they're disconnected from you than playing 'Happy Days Are Here Again' while thousands of delegates in funny hats wave balloons. At this convention, Clinton and Gore played Fleetwood Mac instead, and 'You Can Call Me Al' from Paul Simon's 'Graceland' album."

So what if Peter Jennings on ABC confused Fleetwood Mac with Jefferson Airplane? So what if they played a Muzak "cover" version of "You Can Call Me Al"? It was the first time that the rock-n-roll generations have heard their conventional music close a convention.

It is the Old News that pressed Ross Perot to answer some questions about himself. Sticking like a burr on Perot's flesh has been a high point for straight journalism this year; it will likely be judged that the Old News forced him out of the race. But the New News will also be recognized for throwing open the window on cultural, racial, and sexual diversity that will be more than subliminal themes in the fall. ♦

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CHRONICLE

APPARENT DUMPING

Anatomy of a Trend That Wasn't

The story was a heartbreaker: an elderly man suffering from Alzheimer's disease had been found abandoned at a dog racing track in Idaho, a bag of diapers dangling from his wheelchair. He didn't know his own name, and all the labels had been removed from his clothes; even his wheelchair had been stripped of identification. Emblazoned on his baseball cap was the declaration "Proud To Be An American." After the media picked up the story, the man was quickly identified as John Kingery, eighty-two, a former autoworker whose middle-aged daughter had checked him out of his nursing home in Oregon only a few hours before he was found across the border. The daughter refused to comment on how her disabled father had gotten to the dog track, but the answer seemed all too obvious.

And it was big news. The sad incident spawned a March 26 front-page story in *The New York Times* and a slew of follow-ups in newsmagazines and on television, along with much hand-wringing by editorial writers. The coverage focused on the phenomenon known as "parent-dumping," in which elderly people who have become an intolerable burden are supposedly abandoned by their families. This, according to the *Times*, has become a major trend. "The American College of Emergency Physicians estimates that 70,000 elderly Americans were abandoned last year by family members unable or unwilling to care for them or pay for their care," said the paper of record three days later in a sympathetic editorial that emphasized

the pressures on care-givers and concluded that John Kingery's daughter was as much a victim as Kingery himself.

All in all, it seemed to be a classic trend story: the perfect anecdote to dramatize a problem, statistics to prove how widespread it is, and dire forecasts about how much worse the situation will become as the population ages. The only problem with the story was that it was misleading in almost every respect. However, that didn't stop its mistaken assumptions from being repeated as the story was picked up by a media herd that assumes anything in *The New York Times* is gospel.

The thrust of most of the coverage prompted by the Kingery case was the terrible emotional, physical, and financial burden that the care of elderly relatives has imposed on the so-called sandwich generation, the middle-aged daughters and sons struggling to raise their own children while taking care of their declining parents. However, it turns out that Sue Gifford, John Kingery's daughter, hadn't been taking

care of him at all. On March 26, the same day the *Times* ran its page-one parent-dumping piece, The Associated Press ran a story on its national wire saying that Gifford was under investigation for Medicaid fraud. In fact, what Gifford had been doing, according to law enforcement authorities, was appropriating her father's pension and Social Security checks for her own use. "The checks were going to her, and she was not paying for his upkeep," says Cliff Hayes, the police chief in Post Falls, Idaho, where Kingery was found at the dog track.

Understandably, the nursing home officials responsible for Kingery's care became unhappy about the unpaid bills. "The old folks' home found out about the pension and they were trying to get some back pay from her," explains Larry McKinney, a detective at the Washington County sheriff's office in Oregon. "She knew she had to do something, and apparently what she thought she had to do was make him disappear."

By June, Gifford had been indicted on theft, perjury, and kidnapping

WITH A GRAIN OF SALT

Nutrition analysis per serving: 615 calories, 17 grams fat, 37 milligrams cholesterol, 484 milligrams sodium, 34 grams protein, 84 grams carbohydrate.

May 27, 1992, was a red-letter day in this decade of dietetics. On that date *The New York Times* began unraveling the nutritional mysteries of recipes offered by its 60-Minute



Gourmet.

Readers may not have known what to make of this new data (above) for Pasta With Scallops and Green Beans, but they must have admired its precision — 484 milligrams of sodium per serving, no

more and no less, even though the recipe says "salt and pepper to taste." How do they do that?

John L. Hess
Hess, a former *New York Times* reporter, writes frequently for *The New York Observer*.

charges. "This case is completely different from the type of case where a family has taken care of an elderly person to the point where they just can't any more," says McKinney. "Sue Gifford never really took responsibility for her father until she found out there was money in it."

So much for the overburdened caregiver agonizing over an elderly parent's welfare. But even if the Kingery case isn't a good example, what about all those other victims? The figure of 70,000 per year originated in the page-one story by Timothy Egan, the Seattle bureau chief of *The New York Times*, who attributed it to a survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians. Unfortunately, the survey did not produce that statistic; Egan did.

"The first place I saw that figure was in *The New York Times*," says Jane Howell, the organization's public relations manager. "It's not a number we had provided them with. We don't have an annual figure." According to Howell, who says she was so upset about the use of the figure in the story that she called

**The only problem
with the story was
that it was
misleading in almost
every respect**

Egan's editor to complain, the study was "not a scientific survey ... not a random sample. We just wanted to get a sense for our own purposes of whether this was a problem emergency room physicians were facing." An informal questionnaire had been sent to 900 emergency room physicians. It had elicited only 169 responses, producing figures the study cautioned "did not represent scientifically valid data." Some of the doctors said they had never encountered parent-dumping at all; some said they saw it frequently. The average came out to eight victims "abandoned" each week. Looking for an

annual total, Egan thereupon multiplied 169 by 8, and multiplied the results by 52 weeks in a year, coming up with a rough figure of 70,000 elderly people abandoned annually.

The *Times*'s subsequent coverage compounded the problem. While Egan's article included a caveat about his statistics — "precise numbers are not available" — an editorial three days later dropped the disclaimer.

Furthermore, Egan never explained that the survey's definition of parent-dumping was so broad that it included any patient who lived by himself and turned to an emergency room for assistance. Moreover, even a cursory check of emergency physicians reveals that the most common "parent-dumping" problem is quite temporary, not the kind of permanent abandonment implied by the *Times*. "The emergency rooms that do report [parent-dumping] say it happens around a weekend, when people are exhausted and need to get away," says Dorothy Howe, a specialist in health advocacy services at the

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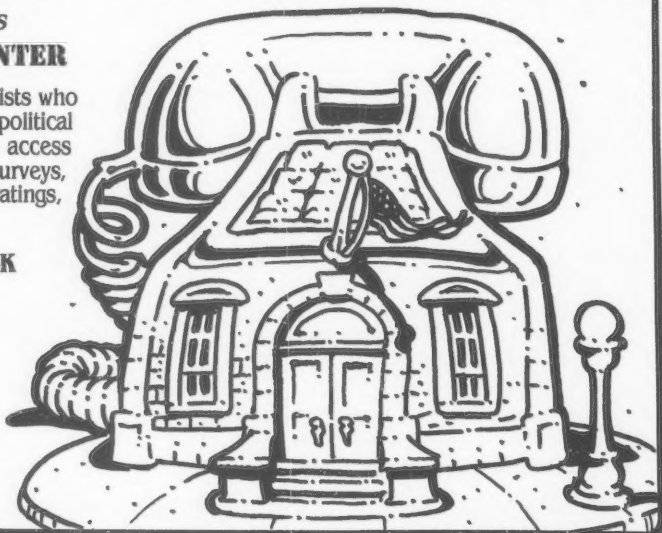
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American Association of Retired Persons. "They just want to go away for the weekend."

Egan's use of expert testimony was problematic as well, particularly for those who disagreed with his thesis. He used a quote from Penelope Hommel, director of the Center for Social Gerontology, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on the high cost of caring for the elderly that is "pushing some families close to desperation." However, Hommel herself doesn't accept his thesis that parent-dumping is widespread. "I really don't think it's out there to a significant extent," she says.

For his part, Egan admits his story wasn't perfect, but defends his use of statistical manipulation. "This was a deadline story done in one day, not a long, thoughtful trend story done over two weeks," he says. "I made my calls between phone booths and hotel rooms. When you have an anecdotal story like this, you try to put it in context. The *Times*'s research desk found this published report, and we did the multiplica-

tion over the phone. I do think that's okay, especially since we said, 'There are no hard numbers, but....' In our defense, you can see I was careful of that. I think our story was fair and accurate — given what we had for that day."

Leslie Bennetts

Bennetts, a former New York Times reporter, is a contributing editor for Vanity Fair.

PROTECTION RACKET

Libel Insurance Is Up. Guess Who Pays?

As if nonfiction authors didn't have enough to worry about with deadlines, shrinking advances, and sphinx-like editors who fail to return phone calls, they now have something new to add to the list: libel insurance.

Since the late 1980s, publishing

houses have been revising the terms of insurance policies designed to protect them and their authors against the rising cost of defending against lawsuits for libel, invasion of privacy, defamation, and so forth. The object is to pare expenses and reduce liabilities, yet the results for many writers have been the opposite: increased liability and stepped-up costs. "For most writers doing their first work of nonfiction, this could be apocalyptic," says J. Anthony Lukas, author of *Common Ground*. "It would wipe them out."

At issue are insurance deductibles, the same kind that crop up in auto policies, only bigger. When publishing houses first offered to take authors under their libel-insurance wing in the early 1980s, deductibles were a few thousand dollars. Recently they've mushroomed to the point where, among major houses, \$250,000 is the norm. Since the policies call for an equal division of costs between author and publisher, writers could be out \$125,000 in the event of a suit.

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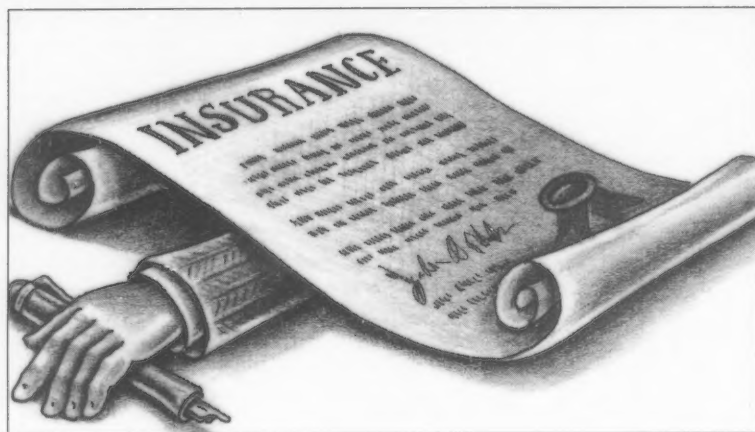
increasing frequency across the globe. So says British author and lecturer Benjamin Creme, who has captured public attention worldwide with his message that the World Teacher for all humanity — the one known in the West as the Christ — has made his long-expected return. Creme says that this Teacher — Maitreya by name — comes *not as a religious leader*, but as a guide to help humanity implement the

principles of social and economic justice, sharing and global cooperation.

"... just supposing it were true. Can we afford not to be part of this?" — Mick Brown, London *Daily Telegraph*

It will take some courage and independence to investigate this story. But then, isn't that what good reporting is all about?

Contact Charley Tebbs, Tara Center: 203-693-0865.



Investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, who recently signed a contract with Little, Brown for a book on Richard Nixon, says that if he were a new author faced with a typical current libel insurance deductible, "I couldn't do it. I would just go into some other kind of business."

Publishing houses are still hungry for journalistic exposés. And as Nicholas Lemann, author of *The Promised Land*, points out, writers often benefit from a system of "off-the-books paternalism," in which publishers agree to take legal costs out of future royalties, which are, of course, negotiable. In some cases, the protection is *on* the books. Random House, for example, which recently had its deductible raised to \$250,000, hedges the deductible with so many restrictions that, short of being found guilty of copyright infringement, little of the increase is likely to filter down to Random House writers.

One solution to the problem of runaway deductibles is self-insurance. Debra Baldwin, vice-president of Herbert L. Jamison & Co., a brokerage house specializing in libel insurance, believes that possibly hundreds of authors each year take out additional insurance on their own. But at roughly \$4,000 to \$8,000 a policy, the arrangement is not only expensive but, to some, humiliating, since it calls to mind vanity press arrangements in which authors pay to get published.

The hike in deductibles represents at least a partial return to the days before joint author-publisher libel insurance, when authors were easy prey for marauding plaintiffs' attorneys. The

only comfort in those days was their lack of resources, which made the deep-pocketed publisher the prime target.

The rise in deductibles is in equal part due to the deterioration in insurance companies' investment portfolios, particularly in real estate, and an explosion in libel awards. According to a study by the Libel Defense Resource Center in New York, damage awards tripled during the 1980s to an average of just under \$4.5 million in 1989-90. Insurance premiums, as a result, have soared.

Meanwhile, the publishing merger mania of the 1980s and the concomitant rise in corporate debt led a top-to-bottom review of budget items that can be cut and liabilities that can be reduced or shunted onto other parties — such as writers.

Authors who look to academic presses for refuge had better look again. Most academic presses do not carry libel insurance and, in event of a suit, the author is stuck, as University of Missouri journalism professor Steve Weinberg discovered when he proposed a biography of muckraker Jack Anderson to Columbia University Press. "Were the Press to be sued for libel for one of our publications," he was informed by letter from one of the Press's editors, "we would refer the matter to our attorney, and the bills for the attorney's fees would be forwarded to the author of the book in question." Weinberg has abandoned the project.

Daniel Lazare

Lazare is a free-lance writer who lives in Manhattan.

PRAGUE'S NEW RED SCARE

I Have a Document Here...

Last April, a high-ranking government investigator in Czechoslovakia waved a top-secret report before parliament. This report, he said, exposed 382 journalists who had doubled as spies for the old Communist secret police.

What's more, these ex-spies still constitute a dangerous "disinformation network," said the investigator, Stefan Bacinsky, who is director of Czechoslovakia's Federal Security and Information Service (FBIS), which is something like the FBI. "I have concrete information that these people, often as prominent journalists, still operate today in a range of Czech and Slovak newspapers and that their widely publicized materials disinform the public," he said.

An alarmed parliament voted to examine the report. As television cameras rolled and copies were distributed to each of some 300 members, parliament also voted to keep the journalists' names a secret. But the very next day the names, together with the journalists' birthdates and their alleged secret police code names, were published in two leading Prague dailies, *Telegraf* and *Metropolitan*.

Czechoslovaks had already read government reports about politicians alleged to be former agents. This report indicated that an arm of the new democratic government had begun to investigate the past lives of private citizens. Moreover, as a few protesting editors pointed out, the secret press list was the outcome of an investigation that no democratically elected body had ever authorized. Outgoing President Vaclav Havel called the list's publication "painful and absurd." The international human rights group Helsinki Watch deemed it "very disturbing."

But many editors did not protest; they simply began firing. The conservative

daily *Telegraf* fired deputy editor Jindrich Hoda, despite his insistence that he was innocent, because he appeared on the list as agent "Navrat." The Christian Democrats' newspaper, *Lidova Demokracie*, fired six journalists. The daily *Prostor* jumped on the firing bandwagon, as did the *Farming News*, which pulled three journalists whose names had appeared on the list off their reporting jobs. The editor explained to a local newspaper, "I can't be open to the political pressure" he might face if he failed to do so.

In its zeal to distance itself from its government-controlled past, the press revealed the extent to which it is still influenced by totalitarian habits, such as accepting government information without question and serving as a propaganda tool charged with guiding impressionable readers toward the correct opinion.

The reaction of *Telegraf*, which printed the list and fired its deputy editor on the basis of it, is a case in point. *Telegraf* assumed the list was accurate because "we suppose that the FBIS is reliable," says editor-in-chief Ivan

Jemelka. Later examination revealed that the list included misspellings, incorrect birthdates, five dead people, and seven who had retired. The central charges — accusations that journalists on the list collaborated with the secret police — are nearly impossible for a newspaper to verify, because secret police archives are not public. Even if they were made public, they would be suspect as a source because many agents embroidered upon and exaggerated the information they obtained in order to impress their bosses (see "In At the Birth of a New Constitution," *CJR*, November/December 1991).

"I would have hoped that people who suffered so much under communism had learned from that experience," says Helsinki Watch executive director Jeri Laber. "Editors, of all people, should be the first to defend against these kinds of attacks."

The *Telegraf's* Jemelka, for his part, insists that the press fulfilled its proper role in printing the names of the accused, in part because such tainted journalists could threaten democracy with their "systematic disinformation." As Jemelka explained, "Systematic disinformation can be understood as certain newspapers representing the situation here in a pessimistic way, or as trying to create the opinion that society is somehow decaying."

In some ways, the abrupt collapse of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe has created a journalists' paradise. As Czechoslovakia wrestles with the questions of building capitalism and splitting the country, readers' hunger for news supports more than ten dailies in Prague alone. But the way the press has reacted to the secret spy list has made it clear that there are still snakes in this paradise.

The FBIS, having focused on the print press, is expected to soon turn its attention to television and radio. "Beside the list parliament already has, the FBIS will work out another report, and this one will concern each of the media," FBIS director Bacinsky wrote to parliament in April. "Information about the network of agents in the media is already being analyzed."

Erin Kelly

Kelly is a free-lance writer living in Prague.

HOW NEWSPAPERS POLLUTE

And What They Are Doing About It

The newspaper industry has always been a polluter, but not on the scale of heavy industry. That's why the Environmental Protection Agency has been slow to turn its attention to newspaper publishing. Now that the EPA is looking at newspapers, they are scrambling to abide by (or in some cases evade) the same laws they used to deal with only in their news columns — the clean air, clean water, and hazardous and solid waste statutes.

"Newspapers are not large polluters but they are real polluters," says Jamie Deuel, an environmental consultant who has worked for a number of major manufacturers and newspapers. Among the challenges newspaper face are:

- How to comply with Clean Air Act regulations addressing chemical vapors called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which enter the air from inks and cleaning solvents and in sunlight produce ozone, a lung irritant and a major component of smog.
- How to store and then dispose of inks and solvents, which can be hazardous wastes.
- How to obtain and use more recycled newsprint, to take the pressure off overflowing landfills.

How are newspapers dealing with these issues?

Clean Air

When Congress amended the Clean Air Act in late 1990, it gave the EPA power to scrutinize previously unregulated industries, including newspapers. After determining that the offset printing industry as a whole is responsible for 1.48 million tons of air pollutants yearly, the EPA was prepared to define most dailies as "major" polluters — a regulatory classification that would have mandated technological changes, more paperwork, and more scrutiny.

The industry lobbied hard against the classification, contending that newsprint



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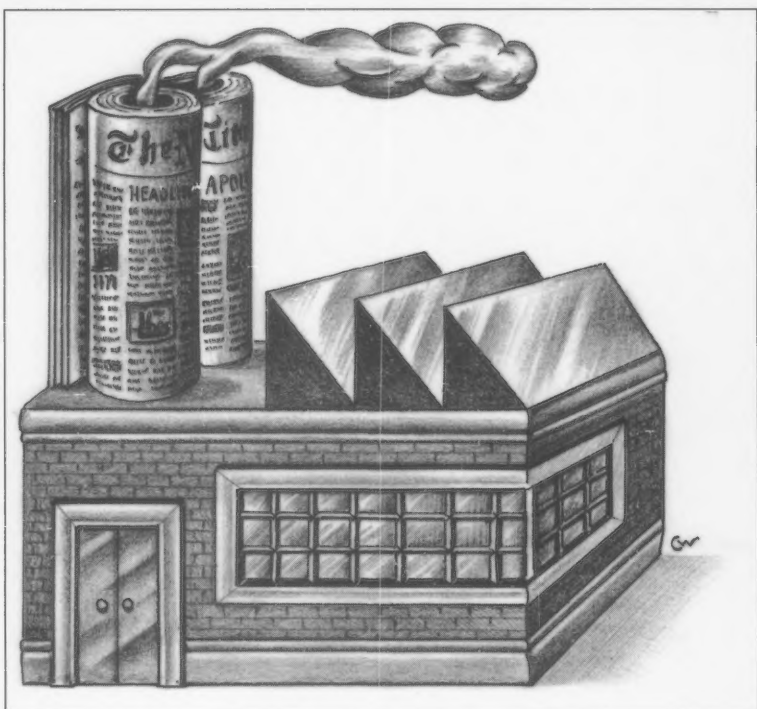
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CHARLES WALLER

absorbs 95 percent of VOCs in ink so they never reach the atmosphere. Environmental groups have not yet focused on the issue, and last October the EPA tentatively accepted the industry's 95 percent figure. As a result, regulations on ink expected to be issued by summer's end will affect only the biggest dailies. Still, because the states enforce federal clean-air laws, some areas may get tougher local standards that could include smaller newspapers.

Meanwhile, newspapers have been working with manufacturers of inks and solvents to develop less harmful products, such as soy-based inks and citrus-based cleaning solvents.

Hazardous Waste

Newspaper cleaning solvents, typically petroleum products, are considered by the EPA to be a hazardous waste. The agency has tended to concern itself with businesses that produce more than 1,000 kilograms (about 2,200 pounds) a month of any listed hazardous waste. Environmental consultant Deuel says that most newspapers he saw over the years generated less, and assumed they were off the regulatory hook. But by law, he says, all newspapers must determine whether they produce hazardous wastes, dispose of them

properly, and document everything. However, many papers "tend to let it ride."

"What I found was, where there was compliance, it was thin, if not superficial," he says. For example, at one metropolitan newspaper Deuel found a storage yard full of fifty-five-gallon drums filled with hazardous waste — four years after the regulations prohibited such an accumulation. At another newspaper, hazardous wastes were migrating toward the water table from underground tanks. The company ordered a cleanup, and kept it quiet, Deuel says.

Solid Waste

Congress is presently overhauling the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and some lawmakers want to set a minimum for recycled paper content — 40 percent has been mentioned. But the Newspaper Association of America is lobbying intensely to have no set standard, just a general goal of using more recycled paper in order to keep old papers out of the nation's dumps.

Demand for recycled newsprint exceeds supply. Paper mills are increasing production capacity as quickly as possible, from 811,000 metric tons of recycled newsprint in 1981 to a projected 3.88 million in 1993, according to

DARTS AND LAURELS

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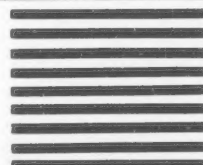
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Wilson Cunningham, vice-president for technology research at the Newspaper Association of America.

Complying with environmental regulations, meanwhile, can be a struggle for even the most environmentally conscious company. Newspapers, like other industries, must contend with proliferating local, state, and federal laws and regulations, all so recent that at many newspapers the compliance officer is a new hire. "The biggest regulatory headache is probably the permitting process itself," says Donald Ayan, air quality management district coordinator for the *Los Angeles Times*. "You get bogged down in paperwork."

The *Times* faces rigorous state and local laws along with federal regulation, and it has made a lot of progress on the environmental front. Recycled paper content averages 44 percent. Since 1987, Ayan says, it has reduced VOC content in inks from about 20 percent to 2 percent by shifting entirely to soy-based inks. Hazardous waste amounts to "a little bit of solvent and residue," Ayan says, because the *Times* reclaims ink.

Sherry Robinson

Robinson, a former business writer for the *Albuquerque Journal*, is a science writer at the University of New Mexico.

DATABASE DOLLARS

Whose Are They?

Today's newspaper morgue has gone high-tech and the new on-line libraries are not limited to internal use. Publishers have realized that there is a substantial market for back issues. The full text of papers ranging from the *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph* to *The Washington Post* is now available via such commercial services as Nexis, Dialog, VU/Text, and DataTimes. Magazine publishers have also latched on to this new source of revenue.

In addition to these on-line services — which are accessed by personal computers and modems — publishers and other information packagers are looking to an even newer medium: CD-ROM, compact discs that contain large quantities of text and still images, and increas-

The potential market for CD-ROM material highlights an important issue

ingly include audio and video as well. Data packagers distribute CD-ROM versions of full-text newspaper and magazine databases to libraries. Several newspapers, including *The Boston Globe* and *The New York Times*, already sell compact disc collections of their back issues. *Time* has produced a compact disc called "Desert Storm" that combines text from the magazine, computer graphics, photographs, and audio elements about the war in the Persian Gulf. And ABC News has developed a series of laser discs on topics like the Middle East conflict and the fall of communism meant to be used with a software program that supplies text-based background material.

The vast potential market for such CD-ROM material highlights an issue that has largely been ignored in the dozen or so years that on-line services have been available: Who owns the rights to this material?

The proceeds involved are not insignificant. Simba Information, a Connecticut research company, estimates that in 1991 total revenues from on-line information services amounted to about \$9.6 billion. Simba and other research companies are unable to break out how much of that total represents full-text revenues as opposed to statistics and other data, but it is widely agreed that full-text is the fastest growing segment of the market. According to Simba, publishers generally receive 10 to 20 percent of on-line revenues. So it is likely that at least several hundred million dollars are at stake annually.

Staff journalists are at a disadvantage in trying to claim a share of this money, because their work is by law considered the property of the publisher. For free-lancers, who customarily sell only first North American serial rights to a publisher, the issue is more complicated.

Charlotte Douglass, a lawyer at the U.S. Copyright Office, says that while

the agency does not have a formal position regarding the reuse of material in electronic form, its basic stand is that if a company acquires rights for one medium it cannot reuse the material in another medium without permission.

This principle has been largely ignored by the industry. A few publications, including *The Washington Post*, strip out articles by free-lancers and syndicated columnists before material is sent to the database producers. Others, such as *Newsday*, ask free-lancers to sign away their electronic rights as part of the terms of sale. More typical is *The New York Times*, which "does not have a mechanism for reimbursing free-lancers," says company spokesman William Adler.

The National Writers Union, an organization of free-lance writers that recently affiliated with the United Auto Workers, has negotiated a contract with *Mother Jones*, sent to members for approval this summer, that requires the magazine to share income equally with authors when a specific article is purchased for electronic use.

And although they have no copyright claim, some staff journalists have begun to seek additional compensation when their work is reused in electronic form. Since the early 1970s, The Newspaper Guild contract with Time Warner magazines, for example, has required the company to share equally with employees the income from the resale of articles or photographs. The guild used this language, in a grievance it won in late 1991, to force Time Warner to share with editors, writers, and reporters the revenues it receives from distributing the contents of *Time* via the Los Angeles Times Syndicate. The guild is now pushing the company to give employees at its other magazines a cut of the income it receives from making articles and other material available on databases such as VU/Text.

"What had been an issue on the backburner," says Linda Foley, a contract adviser at the guild's national office, "has come to the fore in an increasing number of contract negotiations and grievances."

Donna Demac

Demac is director of the Program on Copyright & the New Technologies at New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program.

NATASHA'S STORY

Judgment Call in Sarajevo

One rule of journalism is Never Get Involved. While simple in theory, it's not always easy to follow.

Michael Nicholson, a British journalist for Independent Television News, broke the rule late this summer by flying a nine-year-old orphan out of war-torn Sarajevo. He illegally added her name — Natasha — to his passport as a daughter, bringing the girl to safety in London, where he has a wife and two grown sons.

By doing so, he ignited fervent debate in newsrooms across Europe. Did Nicholson, who has covered fifteen wars and who is well known for his sentimental stories, breach journalistic ethics? Or was he just being humane by rescuing a child from the shelling that

could have killed her?

A number of journalists were appalled, saying Nicholson compromised his ability to report impartially. "By revealing his cards he is blaming the Serbs for ruining this girl's life, for invading her country," says Ian Bremner, news desk assistant at ABC News in London.

Others see Nicholson as having harmed all journalists. "If you get that involved personally it affects your judgment and it allows people to dismiss journalists, to dismiss their objectivity," says Paul Cleveland, operations producer for ABC News in London.

On the other side, William Tuohy, European correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, sees nothing wrong with what he called "evacuation of children." He adds that he appreciates objectivity, but "one must do what has to be done."

"It is ridiculous to say journalists don't have feelings. You can't expect journalists to be machines," says Robin Knight, *U.S. News & World Report's* European senior editor.

Nicholson defends himself against



Natasha Mihaljcic with Nicholson — safe in London

critics, saying that while he became personally involved he did not take sides. "To be partial politically is wrong. But if you act as any decent person would act, then it is okay."

It is his job to work close to tragedy, he adds, and "sometimes you become a casualty. In this case, I'm a willing one."

Anna Shen

Shen, who recently completed a fellowship with ABC News in London, is a student at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

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DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **DART** to *The Wall Street Journal*, for a curious case of amnesia. In an impassioned June 9 editorial attacking the announced intention of Lawrence Walsh, special prosecutor in the Iran-contra case, to indict former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, the paper echoed Weinberger's insistence that "there's nothing to reveal" and supported its faith in the secretary's credibility by noting that "Mr. Weinberger has taken and passed a lie detector test on the matter." The *Journal* had evidently forgotten a previous editorial on "the rush to the polygraph play" published last October 15, in which it rejected as "incredible" Anita Hill's testimony against Clarence Thomas and dismissed as "unreliable" the lie detector test she had passed. Indeed, the *Journal* observed last fall, "Lie detector tests are so unreliable they are rarely allowed as evidence in court."

◆ **DART** to *The Arizona Republic*, for giving new journalistic meaning to the concept of "family values." In a column headed REPUBLICANS SHOULD FLIP THE TICKET, editorial pages editor William P. Cheshire argued in all apparent seriousness that since "in both rhetoric and credibility, Dan Quayle outshines the boss, ... putting [him] at the top of the ticket ... makes a great deal of sense." Although Cheshire didn't say so, his rhetoric no doubt made a great deal of sense in shining up *his* credibility with his own boss, Eugene S. Pulliam, president of the paper's parent company — and uncle to Dan.

◆ **LAUREL** to WCPO-TV, Cincinnati, Ohio, for a quality-controlled series on alleged violations of the Buy-America law by Mazak, a machine tools company based in Florence, Kentucky, but owned by Japan's giant Yamazaki corporation. Based on documents provided by a whistle-blowing accountant (who, upon alerting his superiors to the deceptions he discovered, found himself out of a job), the three-part report (April 27—29) showed how Mazak falsely certified as being "Made in America" products that were actually exported by Japan; in some cases, the report revealed, the only thing made in America was the tag attesting to that fact. The result of this "economic Pearl Harbor," the series stressed, was that while Mazak was raking in the profits from fraudulent sales to the Department of Defense, American suppliers were fast disappearing — and with them, hundreds of jobs.

Compounding the company's violations of the Buy-America Act has been the U.S. government's failure to enforce it: the whistle-blower, WCPO reported, had brought his evidence to Washington as long ago as 1988, where it was steadfastly and quietly ignored. (Until now: the series prompted outraged calls for congressional inquiry; meanwhile, a citizen's suit on behalf of the American people has been brought against Mazak by its former employee under the False Claims Act.)

◆ **DART** to the Escondido, California, *Times Advocate*, for disoriented news sense, to wit: An eighty-year-old man who suffers from Alzheimer's disease had phoned a local dealer to express an interest in an advertised Volkswagen; the ever-obliging salesman had picked him up at his home, taken him back to the lot, sold him a 1988 Buick, driven him to the bank, helped to arrange for a \$9,567 cashier's check, and delivered the man and his new used car back home; now the family of the octogenarian was picketing the dealer for refusing to rescind the deal and return the check. But while other local media, including TV stations KNSD and KFMB, as well as the *Los Angeles Times*, deemed the tale worth telling, the *Times Advocate* chose to pass it by — a decision fueled, perhaps, by memories of the stalled ads of local dealers several years ago after the paper picked up a wire story listing wholesale prices of cars. Not until after two weekends of picketing, doctors' letters, and lawyers' threats had forced the dealer to relent did the paper take note of the story, backing into it as but one example among several in a larger feature headed ALZHEIMER'S VICTIMS CAN BUY TROUBLE. "Let the buyer beware," ran the blurb, "takes on special meaning for the families of those afflicted with the disease."

◆ **DART** to the Belleville, Illinois, *Journal*, for marching to the beat of an Air Force drummer. When the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* revealed in February that a military chaplain at nearby Scott Air Force Base had been convicted of sexual misconduct — a story that Scott officials had tried hard to shoot down — *Journal* reporter Tom R. Arterburn took off on a follow-up inquiry and discovered that it was a far from isolated case. The story he filed, based on interviews with other chaplains and representatives of social agencies serving the base, as well as with local crisis center professionals, swiftly passed muster

with the *Journal's* city editor, but before it could land in the paper, it was zapped on an order from above. According to the *St. Louis Journalism Review*, the order came from managing editor Scott Queen only minutes after he had received a phone call from Major Keith Gillet of the Scott public affairs office, who complained that the reporter had failed to follow protocol while carrying out his mission. Arterburn promptly resigned.

◆ **DART** to the Lynn, Massachusetts, *Daily Evening Item* and news editor Edward M. Grant, for making all too clear the dangers of community involvement by journalists, however worthy the cause. In the spring of 1991 the Lynn Business Partnership — an association of various companies whose stated mission was “to improve the economic vitality and overall quality of life in Lynn” — was formed and Grant became its volunteer director; in the spring of 1992 the LBP’s volunteer directorship turned into a full-time executive directorship with a \$70,000-\$80,000 salary, and the job went to Grant. In his April 13 memo to the association’s chairman, Grant claimed credit for, among other things, generating “the sizable amount of positive press ... and favorable reviews” that the LBP had enjoyed. He did not point out (as *North Shore Sunday* did) that the only favorable reviews of the partnership were the ones that appeared in the *Item*. “Besides the substantial play given to Grant himself in most of more than a dozen *Item* stories about the partnership over the past eight months,” the alternative weekly wrote, “there has never been a negative, or even neutral, word about the organization itself. In most cases it has amounted to public relations masquerading as news.”

◆ **LAUREL** to *The Reader*, a free Chicago weekly, and free-lance writer John Conroy, for “The Irish Connection,” an instructive lesson in the anatomy of a murder story. Investigating the investigation into the sensational “Winnetka murders” — the brutal slaying for no discernible reason of a pregnant young woman and her husband in their North Shore home in the spring of 1990 — Conroy showed how, contrary to all evidence and to all apparent logic, the focus of attention came to be centered on the dead woman’s sister, Jeanne Bishop, a human rights lawyer with an active interest in abuses in Northern Ireland. Conroy’s 12,000-word critique (April 10) retraced the missteps: the naive local police force, yielding its authority to an FBI hellbent on proving a link to the IRA; FBI zealots, fixed on the idea that the IRA had murdered the couple in a mistaken attempt to get Bishop (and raising suspicions about Bishop herself when she refused to divulge the names of her Northern Ireland contacts); the gullible news media, broadcast and print, dutifully following the FBI lead, digging into details of Bishop’s personal life and pillorying her in the press. Only when a witness

finally came forward and the killer — a psychopathic teenage neighbor — was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole was the grieving Bishop released from the spotlight and left in relative peace. Responding to Conroy’s analysis in his May 15 column in the *Chicago Tribune*, public editor Douglas Kneeland concluded, “I don’t have the space ... to demonstrate how unfair much of [the coverage of the case] looks from the perspective of 1992.... What most journalists did in covering the investigation was well within the standards of the business. I just want to say regretfully that I think those standards are not good enough.... We need to do better.”

◆ **DART** to the Vero Beach, Florida, *Press-Journal* and reporter Adam Chrz, for getting too close to the story. After filing a piece on the formation of a new Fraternal Order of Police lodge in the paper’s home county, the reporter joined the lodge as an associate member, participating with enthusiasm in its policy decisions, political endorsements, and fundraising activities (including the selling of tickets in the newsroom for the Women of the FOP’s exhibition softball game against Women in Media). At a June 15 meeting, Chrz cheered along with the lawmen in support of their local sheriff in his reelection bid.

◆ **DART** to *The Daily Californian*, for not even trying to fight city hall. On May 18, publisher Paul Zindell received a letter from Joan Shoemaker, the mayor of El Cajon, in which she strongly criticized “negative” coverage by reporter Michael Drummond and reminded the publisher of his promise “to be positive and supportive of our efforts in this City”; on June 14, upon returning from his honeymoon, Drummond was dismissed. (In protest, managing editor Francine Phillips resigned.) According to a report in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* on the ensuing demonstration outside the *Californian’s* office (MAYOR BARKS, PUBLISHER BOWS, read one typical sign), Zindell observed that Drummond “could have put a more positive spin on his stories” but denied as “preposterous” any link between the letter and the firing. (The mayor’s letter had referred to three specific pieces, published on May 14, 16, and 17. Research reveals that Drummond’s May 14 story, on the unveiling of plans “for a vibrant, mural-splashed farmers’ market designed to beautify the city’s decaying core,” noted potential problems; his May 16 piece featured the dozens of homeless teenage “mall rats who dwell beneath the city’s streets”; the May 17 story dealt with the low economic status of El Cajon residents as shown by a recent census report.) In the wake of the mayor’s complaint, Zindell began meeting with individual staff members to measure their “Positive Attitude Quotient.” ◆

This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR’s managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.



There's No Such Thing As Safe Chicken

Eight out of ten USDA-approved chickens are contaminated with salmonella and campylobacter bacteria . . . Each year, these bacteria sicken at least 4 million Americans and kill 2000. Raw poultry is now the most common source of these bacteria . . . Poultry producers say cleanliness is the consumer's problem . . . But should we have to treat chicken like hazardous waste?

Senator Howard Metzenbaum, USA Today (6/28/91)

The final product is no different than if you took a bird . . . stuck it in the toilet and then ate it . . . (p. 236*)

*Gerald Kuester
Former USDA Microbiologist*

The first thing they go through is the scald tank. There it's nothing but boiling fecal soup. . . . It's a mass accumulation of bacteria on top of bacteria.

Today, basically, the consumers eat it. (pp. 341-342*)

USDA Poultry Inspectors

Workers get sick to their stomachs in the drain. The drain is a lot less sanitary than anyone's toilet. The Perdue inspectors told us to take (chickens that fell) out of the drain and send them back down the line . . . (p. 70*)

Former Perdue Worker

The waste is not always even from the chickens . . . (workers) sometimes have to relieve themselves on the floor. Chickens regularly fall off the line and into all the muck . . . supervisors have workers put them back on the line . . . (p. 70*)

Former Perdue Worker

. . . cancerous birds come through with tumors regularly, sometimes all day long . . . right after I'd put them in the condemned barrel foremen have the floor workers hang

the birds back on the (processing) line . . . (p. 61*)

Former Perdue Quality Control Inspector

I've heard that Frank Perdue ads talk about how tough his quality control inspectors are. He wouldn't dare run those ads in North Carolina . . . (p. 71*)

Former Perdue Worker

Can you imagine Frank Perdue's face when you go to him and say, "I want to put a warning on your chicken that says 'This chicken may be contaminated'?" (p. 346*)

*Jim Vance, Co-anchor
News 4 WRC-TV (NBC) (4/26/91)*

You are risking more than your health every time you eat chicken. You are supporting an industry which cripples workers, destroys the environment and creates an unending horror for birds. Twenty-five thousand birds at a time, are crammed into a dark warehouse, with less than one square foot of living space per bird, choking from accumulated ammonia fumes.

Perdue workers, mostly poor minority women, have to cut up to 90 chickens per minute, for minimal pay. When this unnatural speedup cripples the workers' arms and hands, they are fired and left to fend for

themselves. The government has fined Perdue for deliberately concealing worker injuries and for polluting the Virginia waterways. Perdue is a pioneer of intensive chicken confinement, which means misery for the birds and an epidemic of dirt and disease for consumers.

One More Thing To Worry About . . .

Rather than clean up the industry, current proposals call for covering up the dirt and disease by irradiating the birds. But using nuclear waste to irradiate chickens effectively turns consumers into individual toxic waste dumps. While this may help to dispose of nuclear waste, it introduces additional unknown health risks and encourages the poultry industry to further lower already abominable standards.

You can run this ad. This ad was produced by the Coalition for Non-Violent Food, a project of Animal Rights International, Henry Spira, coordinator, and is not copyrighted. For additional information about Frank Perdue and the poultry industry send a SASE to: ARI, Box 214, Planetarium Stn., New York, NY 10024. Your tax deductible contribution to ARI will make it possible to rerun this and related ads.

*Testimony from the June 28, 1991 Hearing of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate on Poultry Safety: Consumers at Risk.

HOW THE COUNTRY GETS THINGS DONE

ONE IN A SERIES
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For a lot of people seeds are just something you plant in the ground and incubators are where chickens hatch. But if you're someone working to spark economic development in rural areas, those words get used a lot differently. Down in Red Springs, North Carolina, and any of a number of other places, rural electric co-ops find seed money or low-interest loans for promising local enterprises. Other co-ops support

small business incubators that hatch jobs for their communities. Still more call in "resource teams" to help their communities get a jump on prosperity. Why all this from rural electric co-ops? So the children of families that grew up with us can find a future close to home. Jobs and economic growth. If we didn't care so much, we wouldn't be a co-op. (We've got real seeds, too. For a wildflower packet, call 1(800) 245-5544; they grow most anywhere.)



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IS THE PRESS ANY MATCH FOR POWERHOUSE P.R.?

Check out the new and improved devices the big Washington firms have come up with for controlling the agenda

by Alicia Mundy

The use and abuse of journalists by p.r. flacks and lobbyists has long been a fact of life in Washington. In the past couple of years, though, media manipulation has been taken to a new level. How have the spinmeisters come to play such an important part in our political life, and why do the media go along with them?

Media manipulation has evolved considerably since the days when a well-connected flack could place a story simply by calling up a columnist or editor. Power has been diluted among the government and lobbyists, GOP and Democratic factions, and an array of interest groups. And the rise of new media outlets, together with increased competition among Washington bureaus of many papers, has made it almost impossible for a single media connection to decide whether a story lives or dies. As a high-ranking Hill and Knowlton executive said, "You can't just show up with a bottle of Wild Turkey and get your topic on the hearing schedule anymore. You have to work with staffers, and you have to be more aware of alliances and petty fights on the Hill. It's just not easy." To which a former H&K media specialist adds, "You can't just pick up a phone and call Scotty Reston and get a story out, because there are no Scotty Restons."



Hill and Knowlton's chairman of the board, Robert Gray

The '90s bag of tricks includes such time-honored ploys as using media foibles and competition to keep a story alive, as well as "media assistance" and "image enhancement" — slicker versions of the apocryphal call to Reston. It also includes a new emphasis on keeping a client's name out of the news.

And then there's the New Aggressiveness, consisting of threats veiled and unveiled. Hill and Knowlton's Bob Gray began advising controversial clients several years ago that they should "Go after the little lies in a big way." In other words, attack any and all flaws in a reporter's story, then use them to discredit the whole piece. His philosophy, as summed up by clients, is: if you get them to back

down on the minor details they've screwed up on, they're unlikely to fight you on the major ones.

There's also a new and worrisome emphasis on official forums to jump-start a news story when you can't get it launched independently in the media. Though reporters interviewed insisted that no one can create a story if it isn't genuine "news," a good lobbyist can make news happen by putting it in the right mouths. At least one crucial congressional hearing on Kuwait in the fall of 1990 was prompted by H&K, according to Gray, because of concerns within the Kuwaiti royal family that Americans just weren't "upset enough" by the invasion by Iraq (see sidebar, page 28). As

Alicia Mundy is national correspondent for Regardie's magazine.

foreign countries keep hiring American lobbyists to handle diplomatic issues in Washington, you can expect to see more "official stories" on the front page and the evening news that have a hidden agenda.

And there's the latest wrinkle in p.r. — "De-Keatingization," a combination of vaccination and crop dusting that allows a public official to do what he wants to do (such as voting his conscience on an issue), without appearing to be contaminated by impure motives (such as money).

Oh, a few p.r. firms say they're trying something completely different: the New Honesty. "It's something we recommend to corporate clients, especially on environmental and health issues," says a media consultant, as though suggesting a new hem length or hair color. "In some cases, we really push directness with the media, openness. And," he adds, "it sometimes disarms them. When they think you're being up front, they'll let you tell your story your way."

It's a minefield out there for reporters, and the good news is that many of the lobbyists interviewed insisted that we Washington reporters have gradually become sophisticated, less likely to fall for a spin. But if that's really true, a hell of a lot of flacks are making a hell of a lot of money in Washington for doing nothing.

Hill and Knowlton is not the biggest firm spin-doctoring in the capital these days, but it's the first company that comes to mind when media practitioners and observers discuss how news is shaped and how the Washington press corps helps out. The bookends at H&K's Washington operation (the main office is in New York) are Bob Gray and Frank Mankiewicz.

Perhaps the most successful campaign Gray has run is the Richard Nixon Rehabilitation Campaign, on which he's left as many fingerprints as a five-year-old on a jelly jar. It's no accident that Nixon the Monster has become Nixon the Elder Statesman, appearing in your living room in the Sunday op-ed pages, on *Nightline*, before the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and at a dinner at the liberal Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. Ask Gray who got 500 foreign affairs writers to believe they were among the "50" elites selected to receive Nixon's comments on aid to the Soviet Union, and he will only smile. Ask who helped arrange the Washington affair at which President George Bush gave his imprimatur to the Nixon resurrection, and Gray's smile grows wider.

An inside look at a "classic propaganda campaign" by Hill and Knowlton was recently provided by *The Daily Record*, a business and legal newspaper in Maryland, in the form of a memorandum — one of several confidential documents released in court as the result of a lawsuit over the installation of asbestos in public buildings in Baltimore. The memo was drawn up in 1983, but the p.r. strategy outlined in it is timeless.

Representing U.S. Gypsum, which for years had used asbestos in some products, H&K advised Gypsum that "the spread of media coverage must be stopped at the local level and as soon as possible." One focus of this strategy was to plant stories on op-ed pages "by experts sympathetic to the



Nayirah, a fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti girl, testifies in October 1990.

company's point of view." The plan included placing articles attesting to the safety of asbestos.

Although a Gypsum spokesman told *The Daily Record* that the company did not implement the advice, court

HOW TO BUILD SUPPORT FOR WAR

by Arthur E. Rowse

"I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns. They took the babies out of the incubators ... and left the children to die on the cold floor." This was the story told by "Nayirah," the fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti girl who shocked a public hearing of Congress's Human Rights Caucus on October 10, 1990.

Nayirah's testimony came at a time when Americans were wondering how to respond to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2. Her story was cited frequently in the congressional debate over war authority, which was approved by only five votes in the Senate. President Bush mentioned it often as a reason for taking firm action. It was a major factor in building public backing for war.

As many are now aware, the incubator story was the centerpiece of a massive public relations campaign conducted by Hill and Knowlton on behalf of a group called Citizens for a Free Kuwait, for a fee of \$11.5 million. After the war, the group revealed that it was financed almost entirely by the Kuwaiti government.

In addition to helping to cast and direct the hearing, H&K sent its own camera crew and produced its own film, which was promptly sent out as a video news release, or VNR, to Medialink, a firm that serves some 700 TV stations throughout the country. Portions of the VNR featuring Nayirah's testimony were used on the October 10 *NBC Nightly News* and eventually reached a total audience of 35 million — sufficient to win it fourth place on the top ten list of VNR successes in 1990 (see "The VNR Top Ten," *CJR*,

papers show that Gypsum planted op-ed pieces in papers in Baltimore and Detroit. An interoffice Gypsum memo reads: "Attached is an excellent series run over four days, beginning March 3 [1985] in the Detroit News. Our consultant, Jack Kinney, very actively fed much of this information to the special writer, Michael Bennett. SBA is exploring ways of more widely circulating these articles." (As recently as June 30, 1991, the Baltimore *Sun* published an article by Bennett which claimed that the risk of asbestos exposure was comparable to "smoking one half a cigarette in a lifetime.")

The memo further recommended that Gypsum set up an industry group to handle media inquiries and "take the heat from the press and industry critics," and suggested that Gypsum should enlist scientists and doctors as "independent experts" to counter claims that asbestos is a health risk. "It can then position the problem as a side issue that is being seized on by special interests and those out to further their own causes," the twenty-five-page memo continued.

"The media and other audiences important to U.S. Gypsum should ideally say, 'Why is all this furor being

raised about this product? We have a non-story here.'"

Ideally, such articles would not only have influenced the public, but would also have worked their way into court exhibits in the lawsuit and swayed the jury. But this past May, U.S. Gypsum and the Asbestospray Corporation were ordered to pay the City of Baltimore \$23 million for compensatory and punitive damages.

H&K executives call the strategy outlined in the 1983 memo "old-fashioned," but recent H&K blitzkreigs show it's still state of the art.

TALKING FRANKLY

Asked for a success story to demonstrate the effectiveness of H&K, Mankiewicz proffered two: the packaging of the movie *JFK*, and the repackaging of the Wall Street law firm Kaye, Scholer. In this case, there's no memo; just Mankiewicz.

As director Oliver Stone was finishing filming *JFK* last spring, an article by *Washington Post* reporter George Lardner, Jr., appeared, fiercely attacking Stone's adaptation of history for his movie. That fall, a *New York Times* piece

March/April 1991).

H&K scored another coup for its client when it somehow gained access to the U.N. Security Council prior to a November 27 session at which council members expected to debate a resolution dealing with a Palestinian issue. When members entered the council chamber they found the walls hung with pictures of alleged Kuwaiti torture victims. Despite protests, U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering, presiding that day, allowed several self-avowed eyewitnesses to atrocities — rounded up for the occasion by Citizens for a Free Kuwait and H&K — to testify at both the morning and afternoon sessions. Two days later, the council set the January 15 deadline for the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

Most print and television reporters presented the event as a straight news story. A notable exception was ABC's David Ensor, who alluded to "the carefully managed presentation."

Two weeks later, with Congress still debating whether to approve military action, H&K's U.S. operations chief Robert Gray sent a memo to Citizens for a Free Kuwait warning of "the lessening of the U.S. public's enthusiasm for pursuing a military option" and calling for more atrocity charges from "eyewitnesses," a term he put in quotation marks. (H&K's emphasis on atrocities was based on the findings of its \$1 million research study which showed, among other things, that such emphasis was the most effective way to win support for strong action.) By January 8, when the House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing, the number of alleged incubator murders being quoted by reporters had reached 312, the figure vouched for by Amnesty International. Four days after the hearing, Congress approved military action, and four days after that the bombing began.

The press, which had shown little interest in questioning the credibility of the atrocity reports when those reports

were having such a tremendous impact on policy, seemed reluctant to reconsider the evidence — or its own reporting.

An exception was ABC's John Martin, who interviewed key Kuwaiti hospital officials in March 1991, shortly after the war ended; they acknowledged that some infants had died as the result of chaotic conditions, including a shortage of nurses, but said no infants had been dumped from their incubators. Reuters was the only news service to pick up the story, even though the AP and others were notified in advance by ABC. But Martin's reporting prompted Amnesty International to send over investigators and subsequently withdraw its report after finding "no reliable evidence" for its earlier claims.

Now, nearly two years after the incubator story was first told, the dispute over numbers continues to simmer — this despite a seemingly definitive report by an investigator for the Kuwaiti government itself. The investigator, Kroll Associates, Inc., claims to have found credible witnesses to seven incubator deaths by the Iraqis. Nayirah herself admitted to Kroll that she had seen only one of the fifteen babies mentioned in her written testimony, which was prepared with the aid of Hill and Knowlton. Although this report might have afforded the media a news hook for marking an end to the long-running controversy, only *The Washington Post* seems to have covered it.

Meanwhile, it was left to a Canadian journalist, Leslie Fruman of CBC, and to a magazine publisher, John R. MacArthur of *Harper's*, to reveal in January 1992 that Nayirah was not a simple hospital worker, but the daughter of Kuwait's ambassador to the U.S.

H&K had done its job well. The same could not be said of the U.S. press.

Arthur E. Rowse, a former associate editor of U.S. News & World Report, is a free-lance writer based in Maryland.

by Bernard Weinraub reported that "Warner Brothers ... has taken the unusual step of hiring Frank Mankiewicz, the Washington press-relations executive and former campaign manager for Robert F. Kennedy, to promote the film and seek support in the news media for Mr. Stone. Last week," the November 7, 1991, piece continued, "Mr. Stone flew to Washington and had dinner with representatives from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *People* magazine, and CBS." Mankiewicz coached Stone in writing and, suddenly, thoughtful pieces by Stone began springing up like dandelions in bluegrass all over the nation's op-ed pages. (Sound familiar?)

Did Stone himself pen those pieces? "Sure, he did," Mankiewicz hrrmmpps. Then he winks. "Most of them."

If a journalist had the gall to question a scene from the upcoming movie (versions of the script were floating around the country), Stone pounced on him with a full-fledged attack, out of proportion to the comment by the reporter ("Go after the little lies in a big way"). He and Mankiewicz fought back on every negative article, even threatening to take out a full-page ad in *The Washington Post* if the paper wouldn't print Stone's rebuttal to an unfavorable article — a concession executive editor Benjamin Bradlee had opposed. Ultimately the *Post* printed an edited form of the rebuttal. "We couldn't let anything go unchallenged," Mankiewicz explains.

Then he pitted *Newsweek* and *Time* against each other, convincing each magazine that it had an exclusive. Both responded with overkill — arranging cover stories, historical perspectives by veteran reporters, and later, in the case of *Time*, a contempo essay by Ron Rosenbaum on America's fascination with JFK assassination theories. The ploy worked beautifully up to the last minute, when *Time* had to change its cover for its exclusive Gorbachev interview. "But they gave it a big line on the cover anyway," Mankiewicz says, smiling.

When the film was about to premiere, Mankiewicz arranged meetings with influential congressman such as Lee Hamilton of Indiana and Louis Stokes of Ohio. He also arranged a few cozy dinners in Georgetown for friends in politics and movies. After screenings of the film for selected journalists and others, he made the legendary recluse Stone available for questions. Finally, he helped to get Stone invited as a speaker at the National Press Club.

"Frank just knows how Washington works," Stone says. "He got us into the right audience, got the movie presented as a serious historical statement. He knows how to work the press establishment here, and got us a fair hearing with the right congressmen. I think he's a genius."

The second success story cited by Mankiewicz in an interview in May was what he saw as the repositioning of the Wall Street firm Kaye, Scholer as victim, not perpetrator, in the S&L scandal. Kaye, Scholer had represented Charles Keating in his S&L dealings with the Lincoln thrift in Arizona. Earlier this year, Kaye, Scholer was forced by the Office of Thrift Supervision to pay \$41 million and to bench its senior partner because the firm had allegedly helped Keating conceal his financial dealings from Lincoln's shareholders. Kaye, Scholer called in Hill and



AP/WIDE WORLD

Knowlton, and soon pieces contending that the firm had been wronged began to crop up in legal journals and on newspaper op-ed pages.

"Kaye, Scholer was a mugging. We have shown that they have been unfairly attacked by the Justice Department and victimized by the threat of publicity," says Mankiewicz, handing me a two-inch stack of articles defending the law firm.

All this is designed to "target our audience," which he defines as other law firms, accounting firms, and potential clients.

It's not a bad scheme, says media reporter Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post*. "All these op-ed pieces may not save the day at the time, but they can change the debate or raise the possibility of another side of the story, which may come back later to a client's benefit."

Meanwhile, Mankiewicz tells me, there's more on the way. "And there's a piece coming out in *The American Lawyer* soon," he says, smiling.

Weeks later, the new issue of *The American Lawyer* hits the stands. On the cover, inch-high red type declares: U.S. V. KAYE, SCHOLER: THEY GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED.

Asked about this unexpected setback, "So what?"



H&K's Mankiewicz (left) confers with Oliver Stone at a House hearing on the JFK assassination.

Mankiewicz snarls. "I hear they've got an article coming out saying the Rodney King verdict was justified. Here's my quote: '*The American Lawyer* supports police brutality in all forms — from the Justice Department to the Los Angeles police.'"

MAKING A FEDERAL CASE

"Op-ed plants are bullshit," say a chorus of Hill and Knowlton competitors, many of whom cut their teeth working with Mankiewicz. The "new" media management doesn't waste time with opinion articles read by "five people drinking coffee in a newsroom," as one consultant puts it.

"The real work today is done behind the scenes on issues," says a former H&K executive. "You have people of substance going to regulators and assistant secretaries," he explains. "Then you notify the press in advance that the government is taking a certain action, and why, and who you represent, and why your client deserved to have this regulation changed."

"You make your client's story a *government* story, showing how the government's action — by now a quiet fait accompli — has not only helped your client, but is good for the people. That's how you get the story out the right way in the media," he says, smiling, before going on to cite several environmentally incorrect clients who, thanks to adept manipulation, survived encounters with the feds, the media, the "greenies," even a sing-in by aging rocker Jackson Browne.

The executive reviewed the Gypsum asbestos situation. "Listen, the client's alibi was that asbestos isn't bad. Asbestos is one product that is uniformly feared, maybe more than cigarettes. You don't do the op-ed drill."

What he would have recommended would have included more elements of lobbying: "Admit the error. Talk to city officials privately. Explain your financial situation and offer the cheapest way out to remove the stuff. This avoids the costly suit. Then tell the world what a good-neighbor company you are and come back for another contract."

H&K, like other large firms, has tried to adjust to the differences between the two functions — p.r. and lobbying — as they are defined in Washington. On such controversial issues as Kuwait and *JFK*, for example, it was faced with the choice between targeting the media directly or using official channels to spin the story and *then* — as in the case of Kuwait — going after the media. The choice will determine how the press will play the story. Meanwhile, with Washington firms now pushing foreign policy agendas for China, Italy, Haiti, and many other countries, the Capitol Hill approach has gained more acceptance.

"Using Congress is an old tack, but I've never seen it done so openly as I did with H&K and Kuwait," says a former White House official who lobbies, but does not flack, in Washington. "What astounds me is that the press just went along with it. In this case, it was a legitimate story. But it makes you wonder about the other stories that get built up the same way."

The press often has little choice. When a representative or senator calls a press conference or a hearing, somebody has to cover it.

DE-KEATINGIZATION

As Mankiewicz recalls, "A member of Congress told me he'd support me on [business legislation that would benefit a client] if I'd de-Keatingize him first. I didn't know what he meant, but he explained he didn't want his constituents, especially the press, saying he was supporting it just because he'd gotten contributions from one of the parties involved."

The object of "de-Keatingizing" someone, Mankiewicz explains, is to make your target, the person you want to support your issue publicly, invulnerable to negative press coverage. "You have to make the issue bomb-proof. 'De-Keatingize,' meaning Get rid of any taint. You have to give your guy the ammunition to show the press that the issue he's backing is inherently something the public — specifically your target's constituents — wants." An easy way to do that, Mankiewicz says, is to produce a favorable poll on

the issue. The best recent example of this tactic, says a key member of the White House team that oversaw the Clarence Thomas nomination, was the handling of the Senate Judiciary Committee. The senators found it a lot easier to support Thomas once they'd seen *USA Today* polls showing that a majority of African-Americans approved of Thomas's nomination. "We used media polls — which appear unbiased — to give the senators their out on the matter. And the senators used the polls to explain their vote to the media," this source says.

"The polls de-Keatingized Thomas," Mankiewicz sums up.

THE HERNIA STRATAGEM

This is a new technique not currently taught in p.r. texts. Mankiewicz has used it to considerable effect in response to questions about H&K's representation of Kuwait and BCCI. If you interview him in person about such issues he will chase you with a six-inch-thick pile of clips, rebuttals, and op-ed pieces showing what a bum rap H&K took — and he won't let you leave until you've promised to take the clips and read them all.

Don't knock this. This past May, Daniel Schorr found himself on the receiving end of a Mankiewicz missive on

Kuwait. In a lengthy piece for *The Washington Post* titled "See It Not: True Confessions of a Lifetime in TV Journalism," Schorr had referred — in a single sentence — to "public relations 'video releases' or outright hoaxes, like the tearful recital of atrocities in Kuwait by the carefully coached daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington" — whose appearance at a congressional hearing was arranged by Hill and Knowlton (see sidebar, page 28). Mankiewicz responded by sending a pile of clips that persuaded Schorr that he was in error in using the word "hoax."

"I sent a letter to the *Post* correcting myself, and a copy to Frank," Schorr says. "He called and asked if he could circulate it." Shortly thereafter (and well before the *Post* ran it), the letter became a lead story in a p.r. newsletter, which benefitted Hill and Knowlton if no one else. "I think it was cheap," says Schorr.

By forcing the journalist to retreat on one detail, the counterattack served to blunt the point of Schorr's original article — the lack of suspicion among the media about staged "news."

LOBBING BACK THE LOBBY CHARGE

In its handling of the Bank of Commerce and Credit

THE COLOMBIA CONNECTION

What Did Sawyer/Miller Do For Its Money? by Ana Arana

When president César Gaviria of Colombia came to office in August 1990, drug traffickers were holding his country at bay with bombings and assassinations. A month later, Gaviria crafted a new drug policy and offered the drug barons a way out: abandon violence, surrender to Colombian police, and the government will stop extradition to the United States and reduce prison sentences. Within six months, four top traffickers had accepted the deal.

The policy changes at first resounded negatively in the United States. The perception was that Colombia had buckled under the traffickers' pressure. Sawyer/Miller Group, a Madison Avenue public relations firm that has worked with Colombia since 1985, quickly moved in for damage control, earning nearly a million dollars in fees and expenses just for the first half of 1991. What did Colombia get for its money?

Early reports in the U.S. press after the policy change had described a country tired of drug-related violence and unwilling to shoulder all the responsibility of fighting drug

trafficking while demand for drugs in the U.S. continued unabated. But the reports had also explained the downside of the new Colombian approach: that jails built especially for the drug barons (as the recent Pablo Escobar escapade made clear) were outfitted with faxes, private telephones, VCRs, private baths, and gardens; that lawyers for drug barons bragged about the short prison terms their clients would serve; and that drug enforcement officials suspected the barons were running their business from jail.

Much of Sawyer/Miller's work involved the routine production of pamphlets, letters to editors signed by Colombian officials, and full-page ads placed in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, all extolling the new policy.

And much of the firm's work involved trying to influence the press. Sawyer/Miller, which brought former Reagan administration and recent Ross Perot campaign political operative Ed Rollins and p.r. star John Scanlon on as partners (see "The Scanlon Spin," *CJR*, September/October 1989) during this critical period, refused to comment for the record on the firm's relationship with Colombia, and Colombian government officials did not return phone calls. But some of Sawyer/Miller's efforts can be discerned through conversations with reporters and from documents filed with the Department of Justice for the first six months of 1991, as Colombia implemented its new policy.

For example, all requests from U.S. journalists for interviews with Colombian government officials had to go through Sawyer/Miller. Some reporters found this helpful. "When I was working on deadline on a story on 'La Quica'

International, Hill and Knowlton had more at stake than the bank's reputation; it had its own. After former Customs Commissioner William von Raab testified in 1991 that "influence peddlers" had prevented federal regulators and prosecutors from moving in on BCCI, H&K went on the offensive. The firm was registered at the Justice Department as a lobbyist for BCCI from 1988 to March 1990 and had taken charge of blocking any negative publicity about an affiliated institution, First American Bank of Washington.

In response to charges that H&K had "lobbied" for BCCI, Mankiewicz resorted to the hoary ploy "The Public Testimonial"; he wrung from von Raab a carefully phrased letter (which now hangs behind his desk) stating, "I do not have any information that Mr. Gray or you spoke to any official in either our federal government's executive or legislative branch on behalf of BCCI."

True. According to Mankiewicz, all of the work on behalf of BCCI done by H&K was handled by offices in London and Tampa. True, too, lobbying, in the technical Washington sense, means that someone officially registered as a firm's representative officially visited a member of Congress on behalf of that client. Of course, if the p.r. person mentioned the client over dinner, got a few pieces

placed in the *Post*, or placed a few calls to the White House, that wouldn't officially count as lobbying.

In fact, when *Regardie's* magazine, my employer, was going to press in April 1990 with a cover story called "Who Really Owns First American Bank" (about BCCI, Clark Clifford, and First American), we were deluged with calls from Mankiewicz on behalf of First American and copies of letters to congressmen denouncing the story. Still, he can legitimately wave von Raab's letter like a vaccination certificate to ward off an outbreak of skeptical reporters.

THE PREEMPTIVE STRIKE

"It's more common now for p.r. firms to try to stop a negative story before it's in print," says *The Washington Post's* Howard Kurtz. "Correcting a story afterwards is rarely as effective as shutting it down, or turning it around a little."

One increasingly popular way of aborting a story is to launch an ad hominem attack on the reporter. An H&K executive who insisted on anonymity confirmed that one of the standard procedures these days when a client anticipates negative press involves digging up the reporter's previous stories, then alleging that the reporter has already shown malice towards the subject. A former H&K executive provides an example. He says that when *Time* was preparing

[a Colombian drug-gang member detained in New York City last September], Sawyer/Miller people chased after the officials and got them on the phone very quickly," says Joseph Treaster, who writes about narcotics for *The New York Times*. But others' requests were stalled. A reporter for a national television network says Sawyer/Miller declined a request for an interview with President Gaviria because the network also wanted to interview former U.S. drug czar Bob Martinez, who had criticized the Colombian government. "Sawyer/Miller did not want to give the perception that the Colombian government and the U.S. had differences," says the reporter, who requested anonymity. Sawyer/Miller even tried to change the program concept, angering producers, this source says. When the reporter tried to arrange the interview directly with Bogotá, he was referred back to Sawyer/Miller.

Some of Sawyer/Miller's work involved trying to blunt critical newspaper coverage and opinion. When *The Miami Herald* ran an editorial that called President Gaviria a "weakling" who had bent to pressure from the drug gangs, Sawyer/Miller and prominent Colombian leaders asked for a meeting with the newspaper's editorial board. "They were sharp and even followed up the meeting with a couple of phone calls. Yes, we did tone down our criticisms, but it was mainly because the president explained that he was following public opinion in Colombia," recalls *Herald* editor Jim Hampton, who does not think foreign governments need expensive p.r. firms to reach the press. "If I get a call from a foreign government requesting a meeting to discuss one of our editorials, I'd gladly hear their positions."

At least until Escobar's escape, Colombia's image had

improved, in part because of political realities. For one thing, the drug war has fallen off the political radar map in Washington, where the realization has set in that Colombia's earlier bloody stand did not stop the flow of cocaine, and that at least in comparison with some other Andean countries' efforts, Colombia has stayed the course.

Sawyer/Miller deserves some of the credit too, although in a world of ideas it is difficult to determine how ideas get hatched, shaped, and spread. In its Foreign Agents Registration Act filing for the critical first half of 1991, the firm lists a number of telephone calls to prominent journalists, including Treaster, David Anderson, and James Brooke of *The New York Times*, Forrest Sawyer and Tracy Day of ABC's *Nightline*, as well as *World News Tonight* anchorman Peter Jennings, April Oliver and Juan Senor of *MacNeill/Lehrer*, and Stephen Rosenfeld and Douglas Farah of *The Washington Post*. The form also lists a June 6, 1991, meeting with *New York Times Magazine* editor Warren Hoge, giving as the reason discussion of a "possible profile of President Gaviria and U.S. policy towards Colombia."

Hoge says the meeting had nothing to do with the Gaviria profile — "Gaviria's Gamble" — that ran four months later in *The New York Times Magazine*. So does Rio de Janeiro bureau chief James Brooke, who wrote the story. "It is preposterous for them to claim credit for that story," Brooke says. "But you can understand why they would do it. A story they see as positive, they'll try to show it as their work."

Ana Arana is a free-lance writer with a special interest in Latin America.

its cover story on the Church of Scientology, H&K employees dug up the reporter's previous work, trying to document disputes between the reporter and church leaders. In April, the church filed a \$416 million libel suit against *Time*, Time Warner, and reporter Richard Behar, claiming among other things that *Time* had assigned a biased reporter to write the story.

Other tactics include dredging up the number of corrections that can be traced to a reporter as proof of negligence-to-be. Or alleging that the reporter has some conflict of interest in connection with the subject.

"Like the little-lies approach, the anti-reporter tactics are all red herrings," says the former H&K media specialist, who insisted on anonymity. "But if you make enough noise about them, you can make an editor in Washington think twice about how hard he'll let the reporter write the story. And that's your goal."

THE NEW HONESTY

Public relations firms "always say, It could have been worse without our help, when a p.r. problem blows up in their faces," says an H&K competitor. "And that way you can never call their bluff and say, Prove it."

But in the case of United Way of America, failure to accept Hill and Knowlton's advice clearly did make matters worse. Last December, Washington reporters began calling to ask about the UWA president's travel, expenses, subsidiary commercial for-profit ventures, and his personal liaisons. United Way hired Mankiewicz to field "inquiries." He in turn urged UWA to hire a respected D.C. investigative firm to look into UWA itself. The investigators looked, gasped, and gave Mankiewicz the bad news: the allegations were true. The top echelon of UWA had been living in the lap of luxury on donors' dollars.

Mankiewicz urged the board of directors and UWA president William Aramony to follow the simplest rule of p.r.: Tell the Truth. Tell it All. Tell it Now.

But, informed sources says, Mankiewicz was overruled by the board and Aramony, who weren't prepared to let the public know what was happening. The result was that when the UWA stories broke in February, affiliates across the country responded with devastating effect by withholding their dues.

"We could have controlled the story, given it our spin, if they'd let us," says Mankiewicz.

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A BAD CLIENT"

It's fine for Alan Dershowitz to insist on the innocence of some of his more notorious clients, but media types wonder how lobbyists and flacks justify plugging the causes of some of theirs.

It wasn't always like this. Loet Velmans, president of Hill and Knowlton from 1978 to 1986, remembers when the firm had the "luxury" of turning down clients. "Let's call it pragmatism," he says. "But we wouldn't take on clients who would upset our most important people — our employees — or other clients." He cited the tobacco industry, which H&K dropped as a client in the 1960s. "We couldn't do anything for them because they wouldn't take

our advice — to research what smoking would do to you, and to invest in cancer research. They couldn't publicly do anything to suggest the link between cigarettes and cancer, and it was useless to represent them."

Velmans also recalls an era when H&K refused unsavory political clients: Ferdinand Marcos, South Africa.

Nowadays the list of foreign clients of prominent firms such as H&K; Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly; Van Klobberg & Associates; Neill & Company; and Sawyer/Miller (see sidebar, page 32) includes Zaire, Peru, El Salvador, Colombia, Kenya, and Saddam Hussein. With a good spin, Eva Peron could have been packaged as a victim of sexual harassment.

"Things have changed now. The competition is so fierce, hardly anyone turns away paying customers," Velmans says. Mankiewicz wishes that some *had* been turned away. He was infuriated when he learned in 1990 that H&K had been hired by the Catholic bishops to push the church's anti-abortion position. "That's what they have priests for," he says. The controversy briefly raised the issues of legitimacy in clientele, but last year an executive told the Washington staff at H&K, "We'd represent Satan if he paid."

Maybe, but they may have to be careful what they say about him. Last year, H&K was sued by investors in BCCI; plaintiffs claimed H&K had portrayed the bank as pure. The suit was dismissed, but it raised questions of how far a p.r. firm can go with a controversial client.

"If asbestos is safe, China is a democracy, and BCCI is clean, how can you believe these guys on anything?" asks a fierce-featured news show host who doesn't like H&K but often goes along with its spin, like the rest of us. "There should be more backlash."

What steps can the media take to, if not lash back, at least make it clear that the emergence of certain issues reflects the handiwork of a spinmeister? Kurtz of *The Washington Post* believes that more stories exposing how a p.r. firm has been brought in to effect policy on a grand scale will help to alert the public to possible manipulation.

It's a warm and fuzzy sentiment. But as long as we need stories, and as long as we rely on outsiders to do the legwork, and as long as we're afraid of being beaten, says a newsmagazine editor in Washington, we are going to give spinmeisters more credence than we should.

There's some good news: "You won't get a story placed by having a flack call a reporter anymore," says Kurtz. "Most reporters would prefer to hear from the source or subject themselves."

"You are your best spokesperson," says Mankiewicz. "There's an American prejudice against having someone else field your questions. That's starting to come into it more."

So how can Mankiewicz charge \$350 an hour for doing what he does? "Somebody has to do it," he says.

As for the bottom line: "Can you manipulate the Washington media?" Mankiewicz muses, "Can I? Well, if I could I wouldn't tell you."

"And I can't," he hrrmmpps. And winks. ♦

HOW THEY WATCH WASHINGTON

Newspapers are revamping the way their bureaus cover the inside-the-beltway beat

by Dom Bonafede

When Arthur Krock took over as head of *The New York Times* Washington bureau in 1932 with the title "the Washington correspondent," he had serious misgivings about it, and, as he states in his memoirs, "I arranged to stay at my post only during the sessions of Congress." Actually, that was the practice of most Washington correspondents at the time, since the nation's capital was not considered a desirable city for sophisticates.

Two years later, however, Krock moved permanently to Washington and set about reorganizing the bureau, which included twenty-four reporters who covered whatever struck their fancy, often duplicating each other's efforts. Krock appointed a copy editor and established specific beats for individual reporters, thus creating a structural prototype for Washington newspa-

per bureaus.

During this period, mostly in response to ominous events abroad and Franklin D. Roosevelt's radical New Deal legislation, publishers dispatched additional correspondents to Washington. The bureaus soon became a visible presence. Following World War II, bureau chiefs were striding the corridors of government with the hauteur of Medici princes.

Then, in the '60s, television began to dominate the scene, relegating the capital's print press to the back benches. Since then, publishers and editors have been constantly brainstorming to define and redefine the missions of their Washington bureaus.

Now, with the fading of the golden age of network television news, many Washington newspaper bureaus are enjoying a revival — this despite a recession that has forced most of them to impose a hiring freeze and cut back on travel.

Not long ago, conventional wisdom held that Americans were surfeited with news from Washington. In fact, it seems

that what people were objecting to was not the amount of news they were getting but the *kind* of news. In interviews with more than a dozen Washington bureau chiefs, all sounded a similar refrain — editors back home didn't want less news, but less *routine* news, from the capital.

"They want fewer turns-of-wheel, government-gears-grinding, who's-up-and-who's-down stories," says Clark Hoyt, Knight-Ridder's bureau chief. "They want stories about government policies and decisions that really affect people, like regulation of cable TV, family leave, tax changes, consumer and health issues, demographic and social changes that tell who we are as a people."

Chuck Lewis, Hearst Newspapers' bureau chief, says Hearst editors don't look kindly on "he said" stories. "We try to do point of view stories, such as 'Bush looks like a rattled campaigner.' We don't want to be stenographers; we want to put impact and meaning into stories."

Noting that many readers beyond the

Dom Bonafede, an associate professor of journalism at American University in Washington, D.C., is a former reporter for The Miami Herald, the New York Tribune, Newsweek, and National Journal.

Potomac aren't interested in Washington political minutia, *Newsday* bureau chief Gaylord Shaw commented, "We try to think about what interests people on Long Island and in New York City. So much goes on here that affects people's lives, their pocketbooks, and personal safety — that's what we try to write about."

To analyze and investigate governmental action on social, cultural, and scientific issues, as well as to report regular political, foreign, and economic developments, the bureaus are increasingly focusing on issues rather than buildings. "We have one reporter, for example, who focuses on competitiveness," says Al Hunt, chief of *The Wall Street Journal's* bureau. "Stories today are much more complicated. Issues like the budget deficit, international trade, and federal regulation are more demanding."

Howell Raines, *The New York Times's* Washington editor, as the paper's bureau chief is called these days, says the trend at his shop is toward more analytical stories that are tightly written and reflect an intellectual component. Formerly, he adds, a greater premium was placed on expertise than on writing, but now "we look for the complete correspondent."

At the Newhouse Newspapers bureau, Deborah Howell (the only woman to head a major newspaper bureau in Washington) has completely revamped the beats. They include religion, ethics, and morality; children, family, and education; race relations; and social trends and legal issues, including violent crime. Reporters also cover traditional beats, such as the White House, Congress, and politics (including "the business of politics," meaning the involvement of pollsters, consultants, fundraisers, and other professional campaign mercenaries). A "resident humorist" is also on the staff.

Explaining her reorganization scheme, Howell, who was formerly editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, says, "I knew I couldn't compete with *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. It just didn't make sense. I wanted to carve a niche for ourselves, do things no one else is doing, cover areas others are not covering."

At the *Los Angeles Times* bureau,



Barbara Res

Newhouse's Deborah Howell has completely restructured the beats

Jack Nelson has taken a notable step into the electronic age by adding computer specialist Dwight Morris to his staff. Morris has developed a database on defense industry political contributions and is investigating campaign finance violations.

Cox Newspapers, under bureau chief Andy Glass, has been set up as a "service organization" for the chain's seventeen newspapers, including its flagship, *The Atlanta Constitution*. "We succeed on whether we give our newspapers what they think their readers need," Glass notes. "There's an enormous amount of planning and consultation. Every morning we're connected by computer with Atlanta and juggle our resources to tailor our stories to their interests."

Because of the restructuring and diversification, many bureau chiefs are obliged to be administrators, news executives, and office managers. No longer are the bureaus perceived as personal extensions of their chiefs — possible exceptions to this rule being the *Los Angeles Times's* Nelson and *The Wall Street Journal's* Hunt. Except for occasional analytical or commentary pieces, and columns, few assume the role of "working journalists."

Ironically, notwithstanding the vast number of one-newspaper cities, the toughest competition many Washington bureau chiefs have to deal with is their own news organization back home, where editors have access to AP, UPI, and Reuters, as well as a multitude of supplemental news services.

"Editors at Cox papers have no obligation to use bureau stories," Glass points out. "They have all the wire services and the supplements and will pick the best story available — and they might not think it is one of ours."

Hearst's Lewis says he often has to resort to "telemarketing" to persuade the chain's editors of the value of the bureau's stories. "I have to fight to get their attention," he says. "They need to be taken by the hand to see the kind of stories they should be looking at. We're often asked, 'If your story is so great, why isn't it on the wires?' They're always looking for validation from AP, Reuters, or *The New York Times*."

What competition does exist among the bureaus can have a certain incestuous quality. *Newsday* — which despite its small size (or perhaps because of it) has established itself as one of the more energetic Washington bureaus — finds itself in a peculiar competitive position with its sister paper, the *Los Angeles Times* (both are owned and published by Times-Mirror).

"We're more in competition with *The New York Times*, but we do different things," bureau chief Gaylord Shaw says. He acknowledges that the *Newsday* bureau does not cover the full panorama of Washington news, choosing instead to specialize in investigative and enterprise journalism. "We delight in pulling the *Times's* chain," he says, adding that it was the bureau's Supreme Court reporter, Timothy Phelps, who broke the story of Anita Hill's allegations against Clarence Thomas, and that another of his reporters, Patrick Sloyan, won a George Polk award and a Pulitzer Prize this year for his stories on the deaths of U.S. troops by "friendly fire" during the gulf war.

Anyone acquainted with Washington and the press is aware that there is a sort of hegemony at the top of the media heap, comprising *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the hometown *Washington Post*. Reporters from these big, rich, influential newspapers are accorded easier access to government sources, are more likely to be invited to selected briefings and private interviews — and to be favored with exclusive leaks.

Professionally, the most important advantage of the Big Three and the *Post* is that they are read in Washington and directly reach the movers and shakers. Conversely, not to be published and read in Washington is equivalent to being a displaced person — you simply don't exist among the capital's cognoscenti, since there is little you can do for them, or to them.

Some of the bureaus try to crack the invisible curtain by various means. Because the Hearst news service is available only to the chain's newspapers, bureau chief Lewis will sometimes fax stories around town to enhance his bureau's profile. The *Los Angeles*

Times, for its part, launched a special Washington edition early this year. Cox stories are carried on The New York Times wire service, and are thereby guaranteed national distribution.

Breaking a big story is, of course, the best way of gaining national attention, but some of the biggest stories of recent times originated elsewhere before being picked up by the Washington press. Notable examples are the HUD mess, the Iran-contra affair, and the S&L scandal.

Critics point to several aspects of the Washington news scene that inhibit solid reporting. Among them is the proliferation of leaks, which may serve to

compromise the recipient.

As Dan Thomasson, Scripps Howard News Service bureau chief, explains, "You can't buy a reporter with money, but you can buy him with access. There's not a big difference between being leaked to and being leaked on."

Another is the appeal of celebrity status, which can make reporters reluctant to cover unglamorous beats.

Finally, as the late columnist Joseph Kraft observed, many Washington journalists are afflicted with "the disease of the times — narcissism; they believe that because they write about events, they make them happen."

Which, on occasion, they may.

The Top Three

In a recent mailed survey, 200 Washingtonians who regularly deal with the press — including current and past government officials, political consultants, public relations specialists, foreign correspondents, lobbyists, lawyers, and newspaper, television, and radio representatives — were asked to name the top newspaper bureaus in the nation's capital.

The results indicate that while *The New York Times* bureau retains its eminence, it is no longer the bureau in town, what Brookings Institution media analyst Stephen Hess once called the "reference point" for all other Washington news organizations. (*The Washington Post* wasn't included in the poll because, with virtually the whole paper focused on the capital, it is in a league of its own.)

The results for the No. 1 slot were:

<i>The New York Times</i>	34
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	33
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	13

(The combined votes cast do not equal the number of respondents — 101 — since some votes were scattered among additional bureaus, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Boston Globe*, and the *Baltimore Sun*.)

WHAT SOME VOTERS WROTE

The Philadelphia Inquirer and Knight-Ridder stand out after the Big Three in producing stories our readers clip and send to me.

Charles Peters, Editor
The Washington Monthly

The one reason *The [Wall Street] Journal* does so well is that its reporters do not have to do a lot of routine daily stories. Thus, they are better able to target, to reflect, to get some perspective and depth.

Laurence Barrett
Time

I rank *The Wall Street Journal* as the best for the stability of the bureau. They have the same experienced hands covering the same beats. At *The New York Times* they have new people about once a quarter covering the beats where I hang out. You need a scorecard to keep up with them. This does not instill confidence — at least not in me.

... I think also you cannot ignore probably the best reporting going on in this town. That is by *CQ [Congressional Quarterly]* and the *National Journal*. They have the space, they have the luxury of time, their sources are excellent, they work at it, and in the end their stories are used constantly as sources of

information by every staffer on the Hill, probably every lobbyist who needs to know something beyond the first paragraph, every policymaker who wants both sides of the issue, and so on.

Tom Korologos
Political consultant
Timmons and Company

The New York Times is head and shoulders over the remainder, and not just because of girth. Phil Taubman, the Number Two man, is their hidden strength, given his knowledge of the city and his seemingly incomparable sources.... On the downside: I'd put pads on Maureen Dowd's elbows, which always seem to be jamming into eyes of persons she does not like.

Joseph C. Goulden
Director of media analysis
AIM (Accuracy in Media)

Omission of *USA Today* is snobbish. The paper has a major impact, whether you believe it is journalism or not. *The New York Times* is downgraded because its comprehension of non-financial domestic issues is limited in proportion to its potential. Failure of N.Y. editors to understand D.C. gives inaccurate picture to readers.

Andrew Jay Schwartzman
Executive director
Media Access Project

WASHINGTON NEWS

Baltimore Sun: Paul West, bureau chief



Editorial personnel: 13 staff members, combined A.M. & P.M. papers, decline of about two from five years ago.

Editorial agenda: covers top page-one news stories and staffs standard beats, but doing more off-news and explanatory pieces.

Estimated Washington circulation: Washington and suburbs: 6,871 daily, 8,212 Sunday.

The Boston Globe: Mike Putzel, bureau chief



Editorial personnel: 12 correspondents, plus news editor.

Editorial agenda: mix of daily journalism, stresses stories of interest to Boston and New England; "tries to stay a step ahead of the news."

Estimated Washington circulation: 140 promotional/complimentary issues sent to Congress and White House; small newsstand sales.

Chicago Tribune: Nicholas M. Horrock, bureau chief



Editorial personnel: 15 reporters, 2 editors, 1 columnist, and 1 cartoonist, a slight decline but stable.

Editorial agenda: longer, broader stories of major events; strong coverage of regulatory issues; covers White House from "people" perspective.

Estimated Washington circulation: 1,000 promotional/complimentary issues and sparse newsstand sales.

The Christian Science Monitor: 2

bureau coordinators, George Moffett (foreign) and Marshall Ingwerson (domestic)

Editorial personnel: 8 writers plus political columnist, down 4 from five years ago.

Editorial agenda: analytical pieces on selective events and off-beat pieces, but deadline constraints preclude breaking news stories.

Estimated Washington circulation: 2,622 paid.

Cox Newspapers: Andy Glass, bureau chief



Editorial personnel: 22 reporters, editors, photographers, and graphics designers; "holding the line" after a substantial staff increase in the 1980s.

Editorial agenda: structured as "service organization" responsive to the needs of chain's papers; also provides Washington angles to foreign and domestic bureau stories. **Washington circulation:** flagship paper *Atlanta Constitution* distributes promotional/complimentary copies.

Gannett News Service: Bob Ritter, editor



Editorial personnel: 70, including national staff of 11 and 18 regional reporters, remaining stable.

Editorial agenda: serves chain's 83 papers, keeps sharp eye on regional legislative members, offers enterprise pieces, and provides "bread-and-butter" news stories, often coordinating with Gannett papers such as *The Detroit News*, *The Des Moines Register*, and the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. **Washington circulation:** mainly through *USA Today* but figures unavailable.

NEWSPAPER BUREAUS

Hearst Newspapers:

Chuck Lewis, bureau chief

Editorial

personnel: 12, comprising 8 reporters and 4 editors, largely unchanged from past.

Editorial

agenda: favors "point of view" stories, providing added dimension which don't overlap the regular news wires; also places high premium on exclusive regional stories.

Estimated Washington circulation:

none of 12 Hearst papers served by bureau commercially sold in capital (Hearst's *Houston Chronicle* has its own bureau), nor is Hearst's news service available to non-Hearst papers.

Knight-Ridder Newspapers:

Clark Hoyt, bureau chief

Editorial

personnel: about 50, including 14 national correspondents and 20 regional reporters who cover 28 individual Knight-Ridder papers; represents a slight increase over last few years. (Figures do not include the *Financial News Service*, *Journal of Commerce*, K-R Tribune news wire, or the graphics and photo services.)

Editorial

agenda: seeks stories that go beyond TV news and offer significance and potential impact; also doing more long-term special projects.

Estimated Washington circulation:

1,800, includes vending machine and newsstand sales of *The Miami Herald* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and promotional/complimentary distribution of the *Detroit Free Press*.

Los Angeles Times:

Jack Nelson, bureau chief



Editorial

personnel: 49 reporters and editors, an increase of 12-15 from ten years ago.

Editorial

agenda: emphasizes in-depth, hard top-of-the-news stories, aggressively pursues exclusives, and is upgrading its California-related coverage to counter tough competition back home.

Determined to stay in the same league with *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Estimated Washington circulation:

special Washington Monday-Friday edition of 2,000 copies beginning last January, plus vending machine and newsstand sales.

Newsday:

Gaylord Shaw, bureau chief

Editorial

personnel: 13 reporters and 2 editors, little change from five years ago.

Editorial

agenda: features innovative, investigative reporting, eschews inside-the-beltway news, and is intent on establishing its own special niche with a veteran staff apart from its sister paper, the *Los Angeles Times*.

Estimated

Washington circulation: 1,000 daily newsstand and vending machine sales.

The New York Times:

Howell Raines, Washington editor



Editorial

personnel: 40 reporters and 8 editors, little change over last several years.

Editorial

agenda: comprehensive coverage with emphasis on analysis; legislative affairs reporting less distinguished but retains traditional prominence in foreign policy coverage; also signs of less pontifical and more sprightly writing.

Estimated Washington circulation:

55,000, including home delivery, newsstand and vending machine sales, and education service subscriptions.

The Wall Street Journal:

Al Hunt, bureau chief



Editorial

personnel: 60-70, including 48 reporters and 7 editors.

Editorial

agenda: heavy play on politics and congressional coverage, as well as on financial regulations and services, economics, and international trade. Noted for excellent sources.

Estimated Washington circulation:

(regional edition printed in White Oak, Maryland) sales by home delivery, and newsstands and vending machines total — Washington, 25,977; Maryland, 36,005; Virginia, 42,648.

PHOTO CREDITS LEFT TO RIGHT: BALTIMORE SUN, AP; CHICAGO TRIBUNE, COX NEWSPIAPERS; GANNETT, L.A. TIMES, HARLEE LITTLE, HARLEE LITTLE

NBC's Tim Russert:

THE INSIDER

by Judy Flander

In a town where news and politics are closely knit, is a political soul an asset or a liability for a journalist?

Timothy Russert's imitation of New York Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's voice was foolproof, down to the smallest nuance in speech pattern. But, more eerily, to the reporters to whom Russert frequently made prank calls pretending he was Moynihan, it seemed as if he had truly gotten inside the senator's head.

"He would say things Pat Moynihan would have indeed said if he'd made the call," recalls syndicated columnist Ray Herman, who was a political reporter for the now-defunct *Buffalo Courier Express* when Russert was Moynihan's chief of staff, a post he held from 1977 to 1982.

"I first learned about this imitation," Moynihan says, "when three reporters in a row I put a call through to said, 'Fuck off, Russert.'"

Those youthful calls, attributed by Herman to "Tim's lyrical Irish wit," have long since ceased. But if anything, Russert, who in the meantime has made the problematic move from politics to journalism and is now NBC News senior vice-president and Washington bureau chief, has become more adept at getting inside politicians' heads.

"The distinct advantage I have, I know what goes on inside the closed doors journalists stand outside of," Russert says. "You have to realize, fifty percent of a politician's day is spent either reading, watching, talking to, or preparing to talk to the media." Now he's on "the other side," he says. "When I'm interviewing someone, I know what exercise they've gone through, what points they're trying to make, what questions they're trying to avoid." Such intimate understanding of both worlds has proved useful to others who have made the switch, among them Bill Moyers (once Lyndon Johnson's press secretary), William Safire (Nixon's speechwriter), and, most recently, Patrick Buchanan (Nixon speechwriter to pundit to presidential candidate).

And, indeed, after eight years in the profes-

sion, Russert's ability to come up with penetrating questions — and tough follow-ups — for politicians on *Meet the Press* is singled out as his strongest credential as a journalist. A reflection of the show's new energy is the network's recent decision to expand it to one hour. His second asset is his sources. In a town where politics is news and vice versa, Russert's tireless networking with the powerful has given him a useful database to feed to the correspondents he supervises as Washington bureau chief and to fuel his own performance as once-a-week pundit on the *Today* show and as *Meet the Press* moderator. "He knows where all the bodies are buried," says NBC White House correspondent Jim Miklaszewski, "and he knows their phone numbers."

As NBC executive, he has skillfully turned what some called a "demotion" from New York to Washington into a personal triumph. Washington is now the hot spot in the network; stories from there have gone up from roughly 30 percent when he got there in 1989 to about 40 percent.

This has been good news for the stars of Russert's stable — Lisa Meyers, Andrea Mitchell, Fred Francis, John Cochran, Robert Hager — who give their chief high marks for his input, savvy, and support. It has been less good news for those reporting foreign and national stories, which frequently get a hurried read-through by anchor Tom Brokaw.

How long Russert will be able to use the *Nightly News* as a power base is an open question. The show remains marooned in third place and many insiders expect the news division to be sold off as a news service along the lines of Cable News Network within a year. President and c.e.o. Robert Wright and news president Michael Gartner continue to pare down staff, disband bureaus, increase pool coverage, and enlist affiliates as newsgathering partners. (In a recent memo, Gartner outlined his plan to use fewer correspondents and, instead, have anchor Brokaw deliver

Judy Flander is a Washington-based writer.



"more of the news" and "conduct interviews of newsworthy persons.") The creation of The News Channel, a video version of Associated Press, in Charlotte, North Carolina, has further streamlined the news operation, eliminating the "need" for expensive, experienced correspondents.

Russert, a big, bouncy six-footer, is very much at home in his corner office at NBC's Washington bureau, working a multi-buttoned phone, making calls to the Hill and the White House, to cronies, connections, and correspondents. Schmoozing is what everybody calls it — newsgathering via cordial conversations.

Every morning, except Wednesday when he's in NBC's New York office, Russert is a vigorous if unseen participant in the conference call during which most of the story line-up of *Nightly News* and other NBC news broadcasts is decided. His disembodied voice resonates from a speaker phone in the large conference room where "a good deal of the braintrust gathers," explains executive vice-president Don Browne, who usually presides. Assembled are Gartner, Brokaw, and the executive producers, including *Nightly News*'s Steve

Friedman, along with director of foreign news David Miller, news manager Karolyn Lord, and Alex Benes and David Verdi, editors in charge of newsgathering, all of whom present their wares.

Russert's importunings aren't always heeded. When the Supreme Court ruled that the United States had a right to kidnap and bring foreigners to trial, NBC was the only network to bury the story in a "reader," even though Russert pitched a full-scale piece with Carl Stern reporting. For another Supreme Court decision, the long-awaited ruling on abortion, however, Russert got the go-ahead to produce an eight-minute "special interrupt" with Katie Couric substituting for a vacationing Brokaw as anchor and Carl Stern, Bob Kur, and Lisa Myers reporting.

That Couric and the *Today* show itself are hitting news stories harder (and regaining ratings) is cited as another example of Russert's broad reach within NBC. He takes full credit for putting Couric, his former Pentagon correspondent, in the co-host seat after the Deborah Norville fiasco. And when Jeffrey Zucker, twenty-seven, was suggested as executive producer, Russert lobbied vigorously for him despite concern over his youth.

Moderator Russert questions HUD Secretary Jack Kemp on Meet the Press.

“Tim has an enormous amount of power right now to make and influence government policy on *Meet the Press*”

Under Zucker's regime, interviews of Washington figures, by Couric and Bryant Gumbel, dominate most of the show's first segments.

It is as an on-camera journalist that Russert himself is making his mark. “Tim has an enormous amount of power right now to make and influence [government] policy on *Meet the Press*,” enthuses a former NBC producer. “His instincts are very good in selecting the person involved in the process and asking questions or getting panelists to ask questions which will either get the policymaker to move the process forward, or say something that will garner reaction that may move the process along.” When Ross Perot appeared on the show in May, Russert was ready for him. He claims he read every interview and every speech Perot ever gave; he also called budget director Richard Darman “to check some numbers.” He then challenged Perot's plans for cutting the federal deficit so effectively that the furious non-candidate turned his back on the media altogether.

Russert was brought to NBC in 1984 as deputy to news president Lawrence Grossman; at the time he was counselor to New York Governor Mario Cuomo. Grossman, a former president of Public Broadcasting Service was also making the transition to news. The pair were introduced by Washington attorney Leonard Garment, who had been counsel to President Richard Nixon and to whom Russert had been talking about a job in the law. (He has a law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law and is a member of the bar in both the District of Columbia and New York.) At that time, Grossman says, “NBC was dead from the neck up. Tim came along serendipitously. He was energetic and politically very astute. Since I had absolutely no direct experience in news and neither did he, I bit the bullet and offered him the job.”

“There was a lot of skepticism,” recalls Brokaw. “Here was Larry Grossman, who did not have a journalistic background, bringing in this guy from politics. We knew the thing that would sink him was if he came up with bloody hands from a political point of view,” he adds, referring to concern about Russert's allegiances.

“I think you're allowed one turn in the door,” Russert says.

By the time Gartner replaced Grossman, in the summer of 1988, Russert was heir-apparent to the NBC News presidency, a job he once said he'd like to have; but with his mentor gone, and a new regime mandated to cut expenses, all bets were off.

Russert was packed off to Washington, where he was met with a less-than-welcoming corps of NBC correspondents and producers. “He replaced a popular bureau chief, Bob McFarland, my closest friend. I resented it,” says Fred Francis,

who has since become one of Russert's admirers. “And Tim was an outsider and not a journalist.”

Within a year, Russert felt he had become enough of a journalist to critique the profession; he wrote a widely circulated op-ed piece, published in *The New York Times*, analyzing TV coverage of the 1988 presidential campaign and spelling out a number of preemptive journalistic strikes for regaining control of coverage from the candidates' handlers: among them, airing the candidates' stump speeches, avoiding the “photo ops” — “video press releases” he called them — and holding the candidates accountable for the accuracy of their commercials with “ad watches.” One of the most challenging ideas at the time was to take top correspondents off the campaign planes, so they would have the distance and energy to do probing pieces rather than be “distracted by the flying side show.”

Over the next three years draconian budget cuts, necessitated by large losses in the news division, forced Russert to cut his staff from 225 to 150. By all accounts, Russert has dealt with this painful process compassionately and creatively. He has offered what has been described as a “generous buyout program” to everyone on the staff, has reduced overtime, and, in the case of law correspondent Carl Stern, fought to establish a reduced schedule. Stern now assists “the correspondent du jour,” in the words of a staffer, on Supreme Court stories.

Russert hasn't won over everyone in the bureau. “The uneasiness about Tim may be because he is willing to work for Gartner,” observes a former NBC staffer. “He has been successful so far in protecting his domain from being overrun, but by doing this he is still dealing with the devil.” Others, some of whom are genuinely fond of him, are wary of Russert's naked ambition.

As you enter the NBC News corridor you see on the left wall a line-up of big full-color posters depicting NBC's news shows, beginning with Tom Brokaw as *Nightly News* anchor and ending with what seems to some to be an extra-large portrait of Russert as moderator of *Meet the Press*. The corridor breaks there, for rest rooms, then picks up with pictures of the bureau correspondents in alphabetical order.

“I don't think his heart is in being a bureau chief,” says an NBC producer. “His heart is in being on *Meet the Press*, and on the *Today* political panel.”

Russert insists that his heart is in journalism — at least as he defines it: “It is a vocation,” he says. “I am Catholic and I understand vocations. Everybody has a purpose for being on earth. I am most comfortable and best at understanding public policy issues, trying to interpret them, analyze them, and inform the public about them.” ♦



"Karen? It's Bill. I turned up another unsolved murder. Never made the papers."

"Does it fit the pattern?"



"Same as Columbus, Akron and Baltimore."

"Sounds like a serial killer." "And no one else is onto it."



"You had a good hunch."

"I had a good source."

"Who, NEXIS?"

"No, they didn't have enough."

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THE NEWS FOR

An Account of the Conflict Between a Church's Mission and a Journalist's Job by John Hart

When the Monitor Channel went off the air June 28, 1992, it ended one of the more expensive shortlived phenomena in broadcasting. Its owner had spent almost a third of a billion dollars trying to create an international television service. Tens of millions of dollars had been borrowed from a pension plan and restricted funds. After its financial history became public, the management had resigned. What remained was a small television station in Boston, waiting to be bought, running old tapes.

At the center of it all was the fact that the owner was a church. A small one, as denominations go. The Christian Science church doesn't say what its membership is, but hasn't argued with public estimates of 150,000. While it has attracted some controversy by looking to prayer for healing instead of medicine (especially when children died and parents were prosecuted), it has received a good deal of respect over the years for publishing *The Christian Science Monitor*, a newspaper that has enjoyed a worldwide reputation for fairness and balance.

With the growth of television, the newspaper shrank, in staff and news coverage. With the end of television, the church was deeply divided over whether its mission was betrayed.

As a non-member of the church who helped create and then anchored the nightly news program *World Monitor* on the Discovery Channel, I was involved in a conflict between independent journalism and a mission that was not plain in the beginning. What emerged over three-and-a-half years offers a case history in negotiating conflicts of interest.

Negotiations over separation of church from newsroom began when I first met Jack Hoagland, manager of the Christian Science Publishing Society, in February 1988. I'd resigned from NBC News and he was looking for an anchor. His office was on the eighth floor of the publishing society, down a long oaken hall that was silenced by Oriental carpets. Here was the dignity I associated with the newspaper. Jack was at a small conference table with Netty Douglass, his assistant, and Herb Victor and Danny

Wilson, the outside consultants who had contacted me.

Jack was disarming. Unpretentious, with rectangular hornrimmed glasses and shaggy hair in back making a fence on his collar, he talked of quality television, of the need to replace the "airport journalism" of the day, where reporters dashed in and out of news events, with resident journalists who lived in the places they reported on. He spoke of bringing the newspaper's values to television. The paper had won five Pulitzer Prizes.

"What does the church get out of this?" I asked.

"A chance to serve," said Jack.

He told how the newspaper was started by Mary Baker Eddy at a time when the church was under attack by "yellow journalism," that her idea was not to respond in kind but by example, by showing what a good newspaper was, and he thought that, as a result, other newspapers had improved — *The Wall Street Journal*, for instance, and *The Boston Globe*.

True, the paper had a religious column, but it was separate from the news, and identified, and in the back. And there wouldn't be one in the broadcast anywhere.

A five-year plan was mentioned but wasn't shown. It was two years later that a friend, a member of the church, gave me a copy of that plan. Submitted by Jack to the church's board of directors, it spoke of service in religious terms: "*The Christian Science Monitor* can only be understood, and its purpose fulfilled, when it is seen as one part of the vast mission of Christian Science to the world — a mission that brings redemption and healing to individual man and mankind through the scientific action of the Christ-power in human experience. The *Monitor* is one of the modes established by the Founder of Christian Science to communicate Christian Science to humanity.... Today that includes broadcast as well as print...."

This language was missing that night in February. To me, the broadcast was presented as a secular public service.

"*Monitor* values" were spoken of frequently, but what they were exactly was elusive. *Monitor* journalism wasn't codified, so far as I knew, except perhaps in the writings of Mrs. Eddy, which I didn't read. The newspaper was invoked as our model, but when I asked for guidelines the answers were general, usually concluding with the quote from Mrs. Eddy that appeared in the first edition in 1908: "to injure no man but bless all mankind." I learned much later that the sentence before this one, and not often used with non-members, was: "to spread undivided the Science that operates unspent." (I asked a long-time editor of the

John Hart was correspondent and anchor at CBS News, NBC News, and Monitor television. Last spring he led a seminar at Harvard's Institute of Politics on conflicts of interest. Conversations in this article were recorded in notes written or dictated immediately after they took place or within hours.

OPINION

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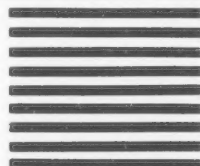
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paper recently why that sentence is generally dropped. The answer was, "It probably wouldn't go down too well with the advertisers.")

But, in the beginning, I understood *Monitor* journalism to be what I had seen it to be — fair, informative, balanced, and rich in human experience. I recognized that the paper and the broadcasts were run by Christian Scientists and I thought that we arrived at the same journalistic values — including the separation of religious interests from the newsroom — by different routes. I understood that Christian Scientists believed that disease and death are not real and that prayer is preferable to medicine. The separation of religion from reporting would have to show in our medical stories.

The issue came up the night before the creation of *World Monitor* was to be announced at a news conference in New York. We were all in a hotel conference room — Jack Hoagland, Netty Douglass, Dick Cattani (the editorial page director of the newspaper), the consultants, myself, and some public relations folks from the church and the outside. We were all given a paper with sample questions and sample answers, to rehearse for the news conference the next day at the Pierre Hotel.

The suggested answer to questions on AIDS coverage was: "There is no issue we will not cover. The difference will be the manner in which we cover it. We would cover medical breakthroughs as an advance for mankind in a scientific age, but we would not offer a detailed medical report."

"Why not?" I asked.

"How did *that* get there?" somebody said. Nobody knew. Jack and Netty both said they didn't approve of it and it was wrong. Somebody in p.r. had made a mistake.

Two days later, the religion question was back. Half an hour before a news conference in Boston, I read a piece in *The Wall Street Journal* that quoted Jack as saying the broadcast would serve as an "ambassador" for the church. I told Jack I couldn't be an ambassador for the church. I was ready to break our deal. He said of the article, "I can't take responsibility for that." It wasn't quite a denial. I said, "You didn't say that?" His head moved slightly from left to right. Cattani said, "We are for separation of church and state. Anything like this would be a violation of that idea." We did the news conference.

The pattern would repeat itself. A religious suggestion

would seem to appear and then it would seem to disappear.

The week before *World Monitor* went on the air in September 1988, we were rehearsing, doing mock broadcasts. David Cook — the highest-ranking church member on the broadcast staff and the number two to our executive producer, Sandy Socolow — came to me one night and said, "John, I just want to alert you. We've made a change for theological reasons."

"Theological reasons?"

"Yes. We don't like to predict a disaster, so we like to source it."

I had written that "Hurricane Gilbert is heading out toward the Gulf of Mexico, where it's expected Wednesday." He wanted us to say, "Forecasters say it should be in the Gulf on Wednesday." I didn't like his reasons and made it clear, but I believe in sourcing, too, so I did it his way. David asked for many a change over the years but never again said it was for theological reasons.

When Steve Delaney did a story about Shushwap Indians in British Columbia a month later, the objection was presented as a question of balance. The Shushwaps had purged the tribe of the alcoholism that had paralyzed it for years by combining the practices of medicine men and Alcoholics Anonymous. I wrote an introduction saying, "The white man's diseases have long since done their worst to the natives of the American continent. Immunities developed to the poxes and fevers that devastated them. Except for one: alcoholism."

Shortly before the broadcast, David came in and asked if there were another way of saying it without the "poxes and fevers." He felt the phrase wasn't necessary to the story. Of course, "poxes and fevers" wasn't necessary to the story, but freedom from religious intrusion was necessary to the process. So when David agreed to call a meeting with Jack and Netty for the next morning on the intrusion issue, I agreed to leave out "poxes and fevers."

Jack conducted the meeting in the morning. He made some objections to Steve's narration, which referred to the Shushwaps' "mysticism," saying it was a throwaway line that didn't take their values seriously enough. He said that Christian Scientists have habits of thought they sometimes couldn't explain even to each other and that it simply came out of a lifelong attitude, not of being Christian Scientists but of being "religionists." It was sensitivity. "If you do a story on a heavyset person who died of a heart attack," he said, "and you stress the heart attack, then every heavyset person would get unduly scared."

Then he issued a policy that there would be no pre-broadcast censorship. If the broadcast hits a "habitual flash point" we'd talk about it later. "We do not want any religious beliefs to be carried by this broadcast," he said, "and if you feel there is any of that, you just stop it."

A month later Jack stopped by my office and said, "Maybe we need someone from the *Monitor* to help select stories." I was alarmed. It sounded to me as if we might be looking at a religious commissar. I mentioned this to Sandy. He said it was ominous.

Eventually, David Cook became managing editor of the broadcast, and when I nicknamed him "the commissar," he laughed. And didn't protest.

Each incident would tell a little more about "habits of thought." The first flash point on obituaries came over a fallen elephant. The old matriarch of the elephants in the San Diego zoo had been put to death because she couldn't walk anymore. The five elephants she left behind gave her a touching tribute, passing the fallen body, the youngest lifting her trunk in a last salute. A zookeeper said, "This is what happens in the wild, they always stand by their fallen comrades." David was acting producer that night. "Well, you know," he said, "we don't normally do obits, unless the people are of overriding importance."

I said, "Well, it's not really an obit about an unknown elephant. It's about animal life." He took the question to Jack, who okayed it.

A month later the flash point was afflictions. The story was about the inoculation of tens of thousands of people in Malawi and Venezuela with a leprosy vaccine made by infecting armadillos. Armadillos, the story said, are the one known animal that can catch leprosy. Up to 20 million people, I wrote, "are afflicted with it." The story went to the news desk for reading, where David changed the text to "affected by it." I went to the desk and said, "Why did you change that?"

"Well, it wasn't really religious," he said, "it was a matter of tone."

I said, "David, if you've ever seen anyone with leprosy you'd know it's an affliction. It's a terrible affliction, and if you say they're only affected, that's taking a step back from them."

"That's a persuasive argument," he said, and took it to Jack and Jack smiled and said, "Sure."

The obituary issue returned a couple of weeks later when David wanted to remove the cause of death from a headline about Franz Joseph Strauss, the West German conservative leader. He had died of a heart attack at age seventy-three. David had already talked the matter over

with Jack when he came to me. He said we were breaking ground by doing an obit on someone who was not of overriding importance in the world. And when we do obits, he said, "we don't normally give the age, but we're going to do it. But I made one small change that I'd like you to agree with and Sandy's already signed off on and that is the cause of death."

I said, "Well, I'd be interested to know what the reason is. Is it that you don't believe that a heart attack causes death or do you deny that there's such a thing as death?"

"No, no," he said, "we know that the spirit leaves the body, but I can't really tell you. And I asked Jack that. We can't really tell you why we don't give the cause of death. It's just sort of a tradition, and since we've broken tradition on these two points of doing an obit for somebody not of overriding fame or importance in the world, and also giving the age, it's just this one thing we'd like to hold back."

It was hard to prove that cause of death was of overriding importance to this story. People who die at seventy-three frequently die of heart failure, Sandy had already agreed to leave it out, and it wasn't worth a big fight. A better case would come along to make the point.

Negotiations were conducted with good will, sometimes at the news desk, with the rest of the staff listening, intensely interested. This was a developing news organization, feeling its way, looking for its identity.

The conflict of interest questions were not only religious and institutional. They were secular and personal, too.

A couple of weeks before we went on the air in September 1988, Jack told the daily lineup meeting that John Hughes had arranged an interview with Secretary of State George Shultz. Hughes was the former reporter for the *Monitor* who had won a Pulitzer Prize and who had later been Shultz's chief spokesman at the State Department. It turned out that Hughes himself was going to do the interview. I said this was a conflict of interest and he shouldn't do it. A week later, Jack brought the matter up again and Ed Fitzgerald, who was briefly executive producer, shot it down. It died when Sandy Socolow objected on the third attempt.

It was a tougher issue when Jack announced in January 1990 that he was going to Eastern Europe on a "fact-finding mission" for the State Department. By this time he had taken the title editor-in-chief and I felt that directing coverage of the government and serving it at the same time would be a clear conflict of interest. He had also joined an advisory board on broadcasting that served the State Department. He was expecting the conversation I asked for.

"We are not *The New York Times*," he said. "We are

The first crisis was the Twitchell trial. Ginger and David Twitchell were Christian Scientists charged with manslaughter in the death of their son.

not *The Washington Post*. We come from a different starting point."

"How so?"

"We are a nonprofit organization. These are voluntary positions [his State Department affiliations] with no pay."

I didn't see how that relieved the conflict of interest. "The point is," I argued, "it gives the audience an instance to wonder about the independence of the news organization. You are going to gather information, not for the audience but the State Department, information that will be used in policymaking, presumably. Then you are going to advise the State Department on how to sell that policy to the audience."

He said he was going to have to feel his way on this one.

"You'll be working for both sides," I said. "You're trying to be on the playing field and say you're on the sidelines. Maybe you can do this and not compromise yourself, but the audience doesn't know that."

He said that his being on the advisory board for international broadcasting had advantages for us, and that he had to consider a higher goal for the whole organization.

"There's another dimension," I said, "and it's one where you may simply say you can't control what other people think and to hell with them, but it arises from your former service with the government." (He had worked for the CIA and one of his specialties was Eastern Europe.)

"People know that intelligence work is done at the State Department," I went on. "They also know that the current director of the CIA [William Webster] and a former one [Stansfield Turner] are Christian Scientists, and, as unfair as associations may be, I feel obligated to tell you they can be made." He nodded his head firmly at the "to hell with them" phrase, but didn't say anything.

He went on the trip, later joined another committee advising the U.S. Information Agency, and, when the guidelines went out forbidding editorial employees to provide any service to the government, he gave up the editor-in-chief title in order to stay on the committees and said so at lunch one day.

The crisis over the church's religious mission came when *World Monitor* had been on the air a year and a half. There were three events.

The first was the Twitchell trial. Ginger and David Twitchell were Christian Scientists charged with manslaughter in the death of their two-and-a-half-year-old son, Robyn. Robyn had died of an intestinal blockage after his parents relied on prayer for healing and did not call a doctor.

The producer assigned to cover the case was Soraya

Zarghami, who had come to the program from NBC News and who was not a Christian Scientist. She immediately felt the breath of the church. "David's been all over me," she said, and "sees every paper."

To help Soraya put the trial in its religious context, David had made the arrangements for taping a church service. The church selected was the one he and Jack attended in Wellesley, and he was present at the taping. When Soraya asked if she could tape testimonies of healings, permission was denied. David told me he had seen such a testimonial meeting on television before and it seemed "hokey."

I told David that, however pure his motives, a conflict of interest was apparent. He was in the position of acting as a public relations officer for the church while being a supervising editor of the news organization that was covering the church. Staff members were in the position of dealing with the arrangements of a church representative who was also their boss, the one who wrote the periodic evaluations of their work that determined whether they would be fired or not, or given raises or not. I suggested to David that he recuse himself from all aspects of the story.

"You should be able to say, 'I didn't see it until it was on the air,'" I said.

"If I do that," he said, "I'd be fired."

"That's the most alarming thing you've said," I said.

He said, "The directors really feel embattled."

"Most of the people we cover feel embattled," I said, "and not one of them has the access you do to the producer and correspondent at every stage of the story. No one else has editor's rights."

"That's something to think about," he said, "More later." Later, David was to say publicly that he had hovered too much and would do it differently the next time.

The second alarm came the following week. A friend on another broadcast came in, disturbed that a medical story had been cancelled. The broadcast was *Inner City Beat*, produced by and aimed at African-Americans in Boston. It was one of several broadcasts developed for WQTV, the church-owned station, as prototypes for the Monitor Channel, which was still a year in the future.

The story was on prenatal care. It was taped, edited, and ready for broadcast. It was scheduled to appear on the day that happened to be the Friday before the Twitchell jury selection began. On Friday morning the control room director of the show, a Christian Scientist, told his superior he had serious reservations about the story: it made reference to hospitals, medical care, and medicine. His superior, who was not a Christian Scientist, decided it would be the wrong time to put it on because of the Twitchell trial.

The third event was crucial.
I went home and began scribbling in
a notebook. I found I was drafting a
resignation.

"I thought we were a community program," said my colleague, "and this was a story that would have helped the community, but it turns out we're an extension of the church."

The third event was crucial. The board of directors wrote a letter to ABC News complaining that a story it had aired about Monitor television had done ABC's audience and the church an injustice by "failing to understand a Church with a unique worldwide mission. In the words of our Founder, Mary Baker Eddy, she organized 'a church designed to commemorate the word and works of our Master, which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing.'"

That was the church's mission. Was *World Monitor* part of it? The answer was in the last paragraph: "All of our activities come within the discipline of this purpose."

I went home and began scribbling in a notebook. As I clarified the issues for myself, I found I was drafting a resignation:

A reporter can't have a mission. The most we can have is a duty. To be accurate, fair, and balanced as humanly possible. The purpose is to know. And trust the reader the audience to use the knowledge. Caring about where the chips fall means one is tempted to meddle. Having a mission means a purpose beyond and in addition to finding knowledge.

There's no nobler or more loving impulse than the impulse to heal and I honor and respect it. And while I don't share your belief, we do share many values ... decency, fairness, balance, abhorrence of the distortions of presentations that exploit rather than explain, context, and respect for the dignity of every human being. Now I see there is something more. The context of this work is made clear. It is the context of the healing mission of the Christian Science Church.

Insofar as the shared values are served ... we are together, I belong here. Insofar as there is a larger overriding context, as it is clear to me now that there is, I am not at home.

I called three colleagues who had spent their lives in the business, told them of recent events, and asked if I were overreacting. Dick Salant, the former president of CBS News and former vice-chairman of NBC, was shocked by the board's letter to ABC. He said my position was no longer tenable.

Sandy Socolow, who had been producer of the *CBS Evening News* with Walter Cronkite, a vice-president of CBS News, and the prior executive producer of *World Monitor*, was shocked by the *Inner City Beat* incident and said, "You've got to get out of there."

Gordon Manning, a former vice-president at both CBS News and NBC News, wrote me a note telling me of his

long admiration for the newspaper and his sadness that he could think of no way out short of resignation. "Anything that causes a reader or a viewer, any reader or any viewer, to mistrust a news report," he wrote, "or to wonder what hidden message or messages may be lurking in same, damages the reputations of all news organizations and all newsmen and newswomen everywhere."

I told Jack pretty much what I'd scribbled in my notebook, and resigned. It was April 26, 1990. He asked if I had been asked to slant any stories. I said no. No one had asked me outright to slant a story, but I reminded him of the pox and fevers negotiation. I mentioned David's role in the Twitchell trial. Was the Twitchell story fair? he asked. Fair as far as it went, I said, but incomplete.

I've regretted these answers since. I got trapped into the technical truth business. Technically, it was true no one said, "Please slant this story," and technically the Twitchell report was balanced. But there was a deliberate incompleteness that served a hidden agenda. And something was withheld from the audience for reasons not stated. I failed to say this clearly.

Jack said he thought I was cutting it a bit fine but would respect my wishes. I agreed to stay until August 1, when Peter Kent would arrive as our new correspondent and replace me.

We did the broadcast as usual. David and I continued our to-ing and fro-ing on the old questions. He agreed that his role in the Twitchell story had had "a chilling effect." He asked if the church's mission was better or worse than GE's, which is to make money.

I said that wasn't the point. The point was that GE didn't have a corporate commissar in the NBC newsroom who hired and fired and evaluated the journalists, protecting corporate interests, having knowledge and access and influence at every stage of the editorial process, hovering over stories in which GE's reputation was at stake.

We discussed the newspaper coverage of the Twitchell trial. We noted that in its first story, on April 17, *The Christian Science Monitor* gave the prosecution's side five lines and the church's side fifty-seven lines.

One night in May, shortly before the broadcast, David came in to talk about Jim Henson's death. He had drafted the headlines that night, and had written that the cause of Henson's death was "bacterial infection," as early reports had given it. I rewrote it, quoting the hospital's later announcement: "galloping pneumonia that had gone untreated for probably three days."

He came in, closed the door, and said that my version "gave more attention to cause of death than is the *Monitor*

style."

"I'm quoting the hospital," I said.

He said he knew but he wondered if I'd be comfortable the other way.

I thought the fuller version was more interesting and better reporting. Besides, I said, "bacterial infection" leaves open the question of AIDS and "galloping pneumonia" excludes it.

Then he said he wanted to be up front about this. It was "rumored," he said, that Henson was a Christian Scientist. Then he said he would defer to me if I felt strongly. I did and said I'd quote the hospital. The rumor couldn't be confirmed at this hour, he said. So I couldn't put that on the air.

It occurred to me later how tough it would have been for David had I reported "pneumonia that had gone untreated for probably three days" and then added, "Henson was a Christian Scientist." The secular newspapers reported it later, but the night we did the headline, *World Monitor* was unable to.

Downtown, the Twitchell trial was under way.

I kept pushing David on separating the religious mission from the news. Couldn't the commissar's job simply be abolished and church concerns be handled by the church public relations director just as other institutions do?

He said he thought, yes, the commissar's job could be abolished, but "the journalism is inseparable from the church's religious mission." This is when I learned that the purpose of the Publishing Society, written in its Deed of Trust, was "more effectively promoting and extending the religion of Christian Science." He said we had pushed the envelope pretty far by doing obits, with cause of death and age at death.

It occurred to me there might be a way to push it further. If there was flexibility enough to abolish the commissar's job, maybe there was a way to exempt *World Monitor* from the religious mission and preserve the church's identity. I asked for an operational agreement. The implication was that an exempting agreement would void my resignation. I had no idea of the strength of my bargaining position. Only Jack and a few others in management knew that the Discovery Channel had the right to drop the program if the anchor changed.

Jack came by my office and we talked for forty-five minutes. He asked me to be flexible. He said he could abolish David's commissar role but couldn't contravene the board or Mrs. Eddy.

I asked if he could tell the staff, "You are not here to spread Christian Science. You are not here to protect the church."

"I don't find any problem with that," he said.

When I asked him to also say that doctrine cannot be any consideration, he said, "I'm not sure, exactly, but I think I can. I'll push it as far as the institution can stand."

He asked executive producer Bill Chesleigh and me to draft an operational agreement. Chesleigh said, "Will you do it?" I said I would, and said while we were at it why not include guidelines on the secular issues, too? Great, said Chesleigh.

It took two weeks and fifteen drafts. Jack added a history of the *Monitor* and its values. Most of the negotiating was over the religious proscriptions. The key paragraph survived. It read:

Monitor broadcasts are not a means to propagate Christian Science. They have no missionary or proselytizing role. Nor do they serve a public relations function for the Church.

It was enforced by four succeeding paragraphs:

The same standards of honesty, fairness, balance, accuracy, completeness, and disinterestedness must apply to our coverage of all issues related to the Christian Science Church itself as to any other issue or story.

Story selection, assignment, production, and editing shall be conducted solely according to journalistic standards, without any consideration of any real or potential interest or concern of the Christian Science Church.

Employees may not attempt in any way to influence any part of the editorial or production process or their products in the interest of their religious or political beliefs, whatever they may be.

There is no subject the *Monitor* cannot cover. Subjects closely related to the Christian Science Church, such as medical news, and events concerning the Church itself, shall be covered as any other subject or event...

The guidelines were tested the day after they were issued. A producer who wasn't a member of the church asked me if the guidelines applied to all broadcasts, including the ones on the church's station, WQTV. I said yes. Then she showed me a document titled "Rejected Book List." It listed the books used by *The Children's Room*, a program in which children's books were read on the air, and it gave the reasons for rejection and several were Christian Science reasons. Here are some samples:

Wendell. Reason for not using: "Contains a reference to aspirin."

The King Has Horse's Ears. Reason for not using: "Reference to going to the doctor for advice."

Tonia The Tree. Reason not used: "The tree doctor is called in to see what ails the tree."

Timothy And The Big Bully. Reason not used: "Timothy is sick. Picture of the doctor visiting him."

The Itty Bitty Kitties Wake Up. Reason rejected: "Dental hiegene-[sic]dental floss."

I argued that the audience should know that *The Children's Room* was censored according to church beliefs

There were several other books rejected for references to doctors and hospitals and aspirin and veterinarians. I showed the list to David and he said he thought *The Children's Room* was covered by the guidelines. I showed the list to Chesleigh (not a Christian Scientist) and he said he had advised David to remove it from the newsroom computer (where my colleague had discovered it and where others could read it).

Management decided that *The Children's Room* was exempt from the guidelines, saying it wasn't a news broadcast. I argued that the audience should know the show was censored according to church beliefs. David and I went back and forth on it for several months. One day the *Children's Room* producer took me to lunch and said the guidelines now applied to all programming, including *The Children's Room*. The censored shows continued on the air in reruns, with no notice of censorship.

A few days before the Twitchell verdict was handed down, Bill Chesleigh said it was his idea "to do a short piece if they are convicted and a long piece if they're acquitted. How does that strike you?"

"Well, I'd think it'd be the other way around."

The next day he said he had decided to limit the verdict story to just the testimony. I argued for a full treatment of the issues as well, one of which was the interests of the individual (in this case, the child who died) versus the interests of the group (in this case, the church). Also, there was the separation of church and state issue. And there were First Amendment issues. (There had been seven prosecutions of Christian Scientists since 1980. Five had been convicted, one acquitted, and one case thrown out. Other cases were pending.)

Bill held out for limiting the story to the testimony. "It's safer this way," he said. David, sitting across from him at the newsdesk, said, "You won't get an argument from me."

On the Fourth of July 1990, the Twitchells were convicted of involuntary manslaughter. *World Monitor's* report consisted of the testimony, divided evenly between the prosecution's case and the Twitchells' defense.

In the following months, David spoke often about the value of the guidelines. In July, he said a producer for *One Norway Street*, an interview program on WQTV, had come to him to ask if the rules applied to his show. David said yes. The producer was wondering because the interviewer, Schuyler Sackett, a Christian Scientist, had cancelled an interview with Rose Kennedy on her hundredth birthday, saying he felt it would conflict with the church's weekly

Bible lesson, which dealt with old people. David was outraged and said Jack would be, too.

The difference between Sackett and management expressed the division inside the church over how its mission could be served by television. The arrival of television had brought in so many non-members that we outnumbered members for the first time in a Christian Science enterprise, and in the most public of the church's activities. Management tried to make this activity appear secular enough to satisfy our consciences, while at the same time assuring critics in the church that their religious mission was being carried out. In the end, neither side bought it.

Jack's critics would cite the guidelines as evidence that he had betrayed the mission.

And, despite the guidelines, the church hovered in the newsroom. Members of the staff were troubled by what they saw as self-censorship when, for example, a Christian Scientist tape editor removed a scene of a woman smoking, and when a senior producer who was not a Christian Scientist sent a computer message to the tape room the day there were two massacres in Yugoslavia, saying, "No bodies please."

While the disclosures that led up to the collapse of Monitor television were financial, the real contest within the church was theological. If the money hadn't run out, leading management to seek controversial sources of fresh financing, television would have survived. But what drove the demands for an end to the enterprise was a charge that the board had not been faithful to Mrs. Eddy's writings in all this and that the church's mission had been subverted. The money situation made the demands irresistible. I believe the enterprise died in the unresolvable conflict between a religious mission and independent journalism.

By October 1991 the Monitor Channel had been on the air five months. It had drained *World Monitor's* resources. Our best technicians and producers were taken away or required to do double duty. Our studio was no longer available for taping interviews prior to broadcast. Our managing editor had only an hour or two a day for us. The Channel advertised that it had five hundred resident journalists around the world. Chesleigh and Cook counted a dozen correspondents on the *World Monitor* staff.

I resigned at the end of October. The Discovery Channel dropped *World Monitor*. It was transferred to the church's channel, losing access to Discovery's 55 million subscribers. *The Boston Globe* began running stories about a third of a billion dollar loss and borrowings from the church's pension fund. The channel was put up for sale. Jack and Netty resigned. More than 350 people were laid off. The channel went dark. ♦

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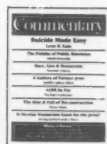
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THE RELIGION THING:

PRESSING CANDIDATES ON THEIR FAITH

BY DAVID BAIRD

In recent years, the candidacies of John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, and Pat Robertson have demonstrated that religious issues can play a central role in presidential election campaigns. But press coverage of religious conflict or controversy isn't a substitute for stories that trace the contours of a candidate's religious heritage and values — an exercise that, though rarely attempted, could add an important dimension to the political dialogue.

Why should the press include something as personal as religion in campaign coverage? Because voters have a need to know at least something about the candidates' most basic convictions — the fundamental values and beliefs that give shape to their philosophies of life, provide the grounding for their daily political judgments, and anticipate the priorities they would have as president.

Despite the apparent hazards of such reporting, it *can* be done. In the latter stages of the 1988 campaign, for instance, Laura Sessions Stepp, a

Washington Post staff writer who specializes in religion and ethics, proposed a pair of stories detailing the religious backgrounds of candidates George Bush and Michael Dukakis.

The proposal, Stepp says, was based on "the not novel but somewhat unusual philosophy that one's religious upbringing does impact a great deal on one's value system, what one believes, and how one later acts."

After convincing the initially reluctant national desk editors that the project had merit, Stepp sought out friends, relatives, teachers, and clergymen acquainted with Bush and Dukakis and inquired about the candidates' religious training, character formation, and theology.

The articles — slated for publication on November 4, four days prior to the election — delved into subjects not often included in ordinary campaign coverage: sin, suffering, worship, communion, faith, the hereafter, and the nature of God.

Stepp and her story editors were lobbying for page-one placement. But hours before the paper was to go to press, some of the editors and department heads — still nervous about the pieces — were debating whether the package should run on the front page or inside. After the question was discussed in the *Post's* 6:30 P.M. story conference, the verdict was delivered by executive editor Benjamin Bradlee. "If there's this much controversy over it," Bradlee said, "it probably should go on the front page."

It did, under the headlines *FAMILY'S EPISCOPAL TRADITIONS MOLDED BUSH'S PHILOSOPHY* and *DUKAKIS TAKES SOME STEPS AWAY FROM STRICT ORTHODOX BELIEFS*. The *Post's* David Hoffman, covering the Bush campaign at the time, commented to a colleague that Stepp's work told him more that he didn't know about the candidate than anything else he had read.

More recently, PBS's Bill Moyers engaged Democratic nominee Bill Clinton in a discussion about his Southern Baptist heritage, the split between the denomination's moderate and conservative factions, the meaning of personal character, and a president's responsibility as a spiritual leader. Yet

the lead of Stepp and Moyers is seldom followed in the national press.

Of course, not all journalists see much merit in such reporting. Peggy Robinson, senior producer for politics at *The MacNeill/Lehrer NewsHour*, recalls that although an occasional "ethical issue" would arise and demand coverage in the 1988 campaign — Gary Hart's infidelity, for example — the PBS program did not attempt to zero in on "personal issues" like the candidates' religious beliefs. Robinson adds that she's not sure that an appraisal of religious views is necessary "if there's a de-emphasis [on this issue] on the part of the candidate."

And Mary Klette, head of NBC's election unit, comments: "You wouldn't cover a family dinner. Why follow them to church?"

On the other hand, Hal Bruno, ABC News political director and former chief political correspondent at *Newsweek*, believes that knowledge of the candidates' religious background can give journalists a reading on their character.

Bruno relates that as a Chicago police reporter early in his career, he learned quickly that the religious orientations of people under stress could tell him a lot about how they would react. "Once I knew what a person's religious belief was, and how devout they were, I knew how to approach that person," he says. Because of that lesson, he has made it a point to be aware of politicians' religious backgrounds.

For his part, Reverend Richard P. McBrien, a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame and author of a book on politics and religion, asserts that the media "have the right and the responsibility to look into the religious values and beliefs of the candidates to the extent that those beliefs could have an impact on public policy."

With so much to recommend it, why is the religion angle neglected or ignored in campaign reporting? Journalists and political insiders propose a number of explanations.

R. Gustav Niebuhr, religion writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, suggests that it may simply not occur to editors and news directors that their audience might be interested in learning about a candidate's value structure. "I think there's a

David Baird teaches journalism at Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana.

natural assumption that what voters care about most is, say, the economy or jobs, so there's a real tendency to focus on that."

Then, too, reporters may doubt that candidates' religious values actually influence their political stances. Stepp observes that because reporters have learned that many politicians say one thing and do another, they become fairly cynical and may begin to believe that "very little matters, particularly something as mushy as religion."

David Broder, the veteran *Washington Post* political reporter, says that although religion has played a role in virtually every campaign he has covered since 1960, journalists look at it with suspicion. "It's not a central aspect in the culture of the newsrooms," Broder says, "so we tend to view it through a screen, I think, of part ignorance and part skepticism."

From his vantage point as Illinois campaign chairman for Jimmy Carter in 1976 and 1980, James M. Wall also

detected a secular bias in the news media. Wall, who edits the journal *Christian Century*, says the media's unwillingness or inability to interpret a candidate's religious sensibility was in evidence even during Carter's campaigns. Although the devout Baptist candidate was widely reported to be "born again," coverage of his religious beliefs actually was very shallow, Wall asserts.

Further contributing to the meager coverage of the religion angle may be the fact that candidates often don't speak out about their values and beliefs — resulting in a news judgment that the story isn't a story.

NBC's Lisa Myers recalls that in 1988 her network was willing to air the religious views of Bush and Dukakis. "But," she adds, "both of these guys were very private individuals who were not comfortable speaking about their religious beliefs."

The religious views of Dukakis, who said, "My own feelings about religion and my own church are very personal to me," received little attention. Bush was less reticent, at least when speaking to the religious press. In an interview published in *Christianity Today* a number of weeks before the election, he freely discussed his claims to faith. "There was never any doubt that Jesus Christ was my Savior and Lord," Bush told the magazine. "To this day, I have total conviction on this point." Still, neither candidate seemed interested in making his faith an issue in the campaign.

Another reason reporters may be uncomfortable covering the religion angle, suggests James Wall, is that the media have no language with which to discuss matters of faith. He illustrates the point with a story from the 1976 Carter campaign. He had asked Carter how he felt about losing a certain primary, and Carter had responded that it was for the best.

Obviously, Wall remarks, Carter meant that while he would have preferred to have won, "all things work together for good for those who love the Lord." But translating Carter's comment into "journalese" is virtually impossible, according to Wall. "How do you put that? 'CARTER GLAD HE LOST THE ELECTION?' The language is not

there in the public dialogue."

Frank Watkins, longtime press secretary and political director for Jesse Jackson, observes that when reporters "try to dabble [in religion], they don't formulate the questions properly, and they don't [interpret] the answers properly, either. They tend to cloud issues as opposed to clarifying them."

Watkins adds, "You cannot understand our history, you cannot understand contemporary life, and you cannot understand American values if you don't have a very clear understanding of the relationship between religion and politics."

WHY PEOPLE OF GOD DON'T TALK TO THE PRESS

BY PAUL WILKES

Recently I spent the better part of a year doing a story for *The New Yorker* on the archbishop of Milwaukee, Rembert Weakland. To get an accurate picture of what a member of the Catholic hierarchy does and thinks, I visited with him a number of times in Milwaukee, returned with him to his monastery (he is a Benedictine monk) and the town of his birth in Pennsylvania, traveled with him to a national bishops' conference in Washington, then on to El Salvador.

I knew there was a lot of local interest in Weakland and the Milwaukee newspapers might have something to say

Paul Wilkes has written extensively on religious subjects and wrote and directed a PBS documentary on Thomas Merton. He teaches journalism and documentary film at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts.

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about the profile, but when stories appeared I was confounded by *what* that news was.

WEAKLAND CRITICAL OF CELIBACY, proclaimed the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, with a subhead that added, SAYS REQUIREMENT A DETRIMENT TO CHURCH. The afternoon *Journal's* headline blared, WEAKLAND: "FALLING IN LOVE ALL THE TIME." His criticism of celibacy was old news. Years before he had said that accepting only unmarried men for the priesthood did not work in the best interests of his church. As for "falling in love all the time," yes, the archbishop had said it, but in a discussion about the loneliness he and others who lead celibate lives experience and how he was as normal as the next guy when it came to having an attraction to the opposite sex. Also, when seen in context, it was a metaphorical, philosophical statement about a certain zest for life.

People of God don't talk to people of the press for good reason. Those two stories and the headlines are dramatic proof. I do not want to tar and feather the two reporters who wrote the stories in Milwaukee, because they are serious, competent practitioners. And the *Journal*, to its credit, ran two long excerpts from the profile to try to give a fuller picture of Weakland. But why should the archbishop of Milwaukee — or any church person or, for that matter, anyone who is serious about spirituality or beliefs — reveal innermost thoughts to reporters who may quite likely trivialize or misrepresent what they say?

Just as the Weakland profile was appearing in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times* ran a story about how, in lieu of a vacation, people were going to retreat houses and monasteries for a different kind of renewal and refreshment. "Everybody is posing Camus-type questions," a talk-show host offers up her appraisal. One seeker reports on his time at a Carmelite house of prayer in California: "I used to go over to the health spa when I got stressed out. Now I just sit here and listen. I end up in better shape after a weekend."

It is not that people didn't say those things to the reporter, but filling a piece with such drivel leaves the impression that a trip to regain a person's spiritual bearings is on a par with the purchase of

Religion and spirituality are not things polite people talk openly about these days.

the newest exercise machine.

When I commiserated with Weakland at the overheated coverage in Milwaukee, he was amazed that I had been amazed. Weakland, often a subject of coverage because of his work on the Catholic bishops' economic pastoral in 1986 and, more recently, because of his "listening sessions" on abortion and his openness to ordaining married men, said he tries hard not to read too closely what he has allegedly said or what is being said about him. "Journalism," he said, his intonation infusing the word with a certain mystery.

Paul Hanson, a respected Old Testament scholar and professor at Harvard Divinity School, reflected on his dealings with the media and summed it up this way: "You can tell from the questions that the person probably hasn't had the basic course in religion, a course that used to be required at many schools but which is now largely optional. I find myself trying to be open, but I am also somewhat cautious, as the person asking the questions usually doesn't know the language or the landmarks. I almost always have to start at square one." Hanson added that when journalists "don't have the basics to hang the story on," the result is usually "bland reporting."

Reverend Richard P. McBrien, a theologian at the University of Notre Dame and a syndicated columnist, attributes the lack of good judgment in reporting on religious matters to the fact that "religion is not top on most publications' or stations' lists of things to cover, so often the job of covering it does not go to the most competent person. People who cover politics or science come with some pretty extensive background; this is usually not the case

for religion. And beyond accepting pure incompetence, some papers have a reputation for not taking religion seriously. *The Washington Post* is a prime example. To me, the *Post* looks on religion as a study of entrails and what kind of owls or good omens you're buying today."

"When I see what I've said in print," McBrien added, "it strikes me that the reporter has often missed the nuances. Our local paper, the *South Bend Tribune*, had an otherwise nice piece on me, but ended it with something like: Although McBrien respects Pope John Paul II, he said, 'I don't agree with him.'

"Don't agree with him on *what*?"

"If I had one prayer to be answered," says Bishop Kenneth Untener of Saginaw, Michigan, "it would be that the person who writes the story would write the headline. At least the reporter has a *little* knowledge of the subject. When it gets to the desk, you're at the mercy of someone who might not have even that and looks for a punchy line to pull out."

I think there is still another, overriding reason the media do so poorly in covering this subject. Religion and spirituality are not things that polite people talk openly about these days and so reporters — often suppressing their own spiritual confusion and hunger — are straining to pave over their feelings in this very sensitive area and want to convince the world (and that small, barely audible voice within them) that they can handle it like any other news story. Where's the lead? Where's the peppiest quote? What's going to grab the editor first and the reader second?

What I have found — through the comments, calls, and letters I receive — is that not only is the general public interested in religion; it is also more than willing to have it treated seriously.

After all, what are religion and spirituality about? They are about the deepest desires within man and woman to make sense out of their lives and to establish and nourish a relationship with a power outside themselves. Who wouldn't want to read about — in depth and at length — a subject at once so elusive and yet so important to all of us? ♦

WE ALL WORK, DON'T WE?

BY PHIL PRIMACK

The Labor Day menu has been much the same for years now: last hits at the beach, hamburgers on the grill, and the annual IS LABOR DEAD? piece in papers across the country.

In this presidential election year, unions might get a little more ink and air time: Will blue-collar union workers recant their recent Republican ways? Does big-labor backing help Bill Clinton by giving him money and field support, or does it hurt him by tagging him as special interest panderer?

But more important stories about unions, and the workers they represent, receive little play nowadays. Unions account for barely one in six American workers, editors argue. And AFL-CIO actions more often seem the doings of the last politburo in the world than those of an aggressive advocate for workers.

Yet the failure to cover unions — except for the occasional strike or UNION BOSS INDICTED piece — camouflages a more serious failure to cover worker issues at all. "You get the impression sometimes that these [working class] people just do not count, except when they shoot someone," says Bob Baker, who was the *Los Angeles Times's* labor reporter until the paper scrapped that venerable beat last year, replacing it with the somewhat amorphous "work-

place" label other papers have also adopted.

A prime example of reporting opportunity lost because of this trend is the September 3, 1991, fire at a Hamlet, North Carolina, chicken plant. There, behind doors that the company had illegally locked shut, twenty-five workers died and another fifty-six were injured.

The disaster did get short-term play. All three networks gave the story day-of-fire coverage. Both CBS and NBC filed next-day follows. ABC dropped the story on its *Nightly News*, but produced an October 23 *Nightline* broadcast devoted to hazards in the poultry industry. (The analysis segment on *Nightline* included comments from a federal labor official, a poultry industry executive, and a union staffer — but, typically, not a single worker was given a chance to speak.)

Papers such as *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* sent reporters to Hamlet to write pieces on post-fire hardship and loss. But enterprise reporting was sparse on, say, the failings of the Reagan-Bush Occupational Safety and Health Administration or those of state regulators (North Carolina inspectors had never visited the Imperial Food Products plant in the eleven years of its existence).

Notable exceptions were provided by *USA Today*, which last September 5 put together a good package on worker-safety issues, and *Time*, which ran a nearly 1,500-word piece titled "Death on the Shop Floor." (*Death on the Job*, a Home Box Office documentary, covered petrochemical, commercial fishing, and other workplace hazards. Completed before the Hamlet disaster, it was nominated for an Academy Award this year.)

Mea culpa: my own newspaper, the *Boston Herald*, where I am supposed to cover labor among other things, ran only a few wire-service paragraphs about Hamlet. I was covering other stories at the time, but I too failed to use the Hamlet disaster as a hook to delve into workplace hazards that have probably multiplied in my own backyard as recession-hit Massachusetts firms take cost-saving measures that could cut safety corners.

Then again, no editor suggested the

idea. And therein may be both the crux of the problem and a way to solving it.

Most of the few labor reporters left today, like most of the new breed of workplace writers, are assigned to their papers' business sections, where space is tight and the investigative approach is not commonly encouraged. If the workplace were treated more as a hard news beat, and if reporters felt that their pieces could more easily make it to page one, coverage might quickly improve. The beat might also attract more aggressive reporters, who could see such stories as a career builder rather than the downwardly mobile assignment labor reporting is often seen to be.

Stories about factory dangers or worker hassles require getting into factories and talking to workers. That means good old-fashioned beat development and reporting, whether it is called labor or workplace or something else.

Meanwhile, the nation's workplaces remain a largely untapped gold mine of stories. For example, long before it became a cachet newsroom issue, the occupational hazard now called repetitive stress injury was commonplace among workers in chicken plants, in supermarkets, and on assembly lines. But only when RSI made its way into white-collar offices, including newsrooms, did it begin to receive extensive coverage.

Despite the views of some labor leaders, the lack of attention to such occupational issues is not part of some press conspiracy to ignore workers, though animosity toward unions is common among newsroom executives. Rather, the lapse is due to a combination of laziness, questionable priorities, and a growing socioeconomic gap between journalists and blue-collar readers and viewers.

Yet it is in the press's self-interest to better cover the workplace. After all, work is the great commonality. Most people define their lives by their jobs. It seems only reasonable that they would buy newspapers and watch broadcasts that speak more often to that commonality, especially in times of recession and broad industrial restructuring.

They would certainly rather learn about the next workplace disaster as readers and viewers than as victims. ♦

Phil Primack has written about labor issues for twenty years. He currently covers labor and the economy for the Boston Herald.

BOOKS

THE WOODBRO REHAB PROJECT

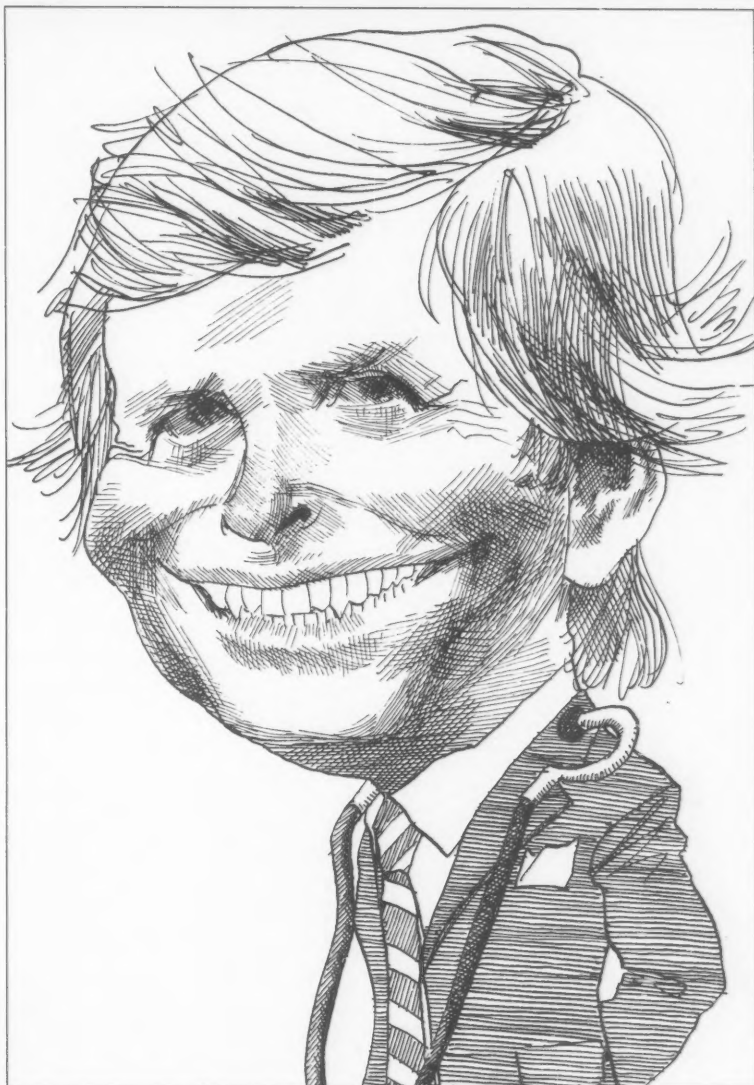
BY WILLIAM BOOT

Even though he cannot spell "potato," Dan Quayle is a force to be reckoned with, an idea whose time has come, an underrated ideological powerhouse, and a master tactician: such were the messages that spewed from major news media in the first half of 1992, and they represented a striking departure. In the early days of the current administration, our doe-eyed, gaffe-plagued ("What a waste it is to lose one's mind or not to have a mind...") vice-president was either ignored or ridiculed by powerful organs of information. He mainly made news when he spoke dazedly of there being oxygen and water on Mars, or

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE PRESIDENT: DAN QUAYLE
BY BOB WOODWARD AND DAVID BRODER
SIMON & SCHUSTER, 207 PP. \$18

said the Holocaust happened in the United States. News organizations once belittled Quayle's competency and intellect with such virulence that Marilyn Quayle told *The Washington Post* the journalists pursuing her husband seemed "kind of like germs rolling [out from] under a lid." By last spring, however, many of those same reporters and news organs were reporting that the vice-president was, in point of fact, a man on the rise — indeed, one of the Top Guns of American politics.

William Boot is the pen name of Christopher Hanson, Washington correspondent for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.



Many factors contributed to this astonishing remake of Quayle, but the vice-president probably owed more to Bob Woodward and David Broder than to anybody else. Those two exceedingly influential journalists rose to an oft-issued challenge from the veep's public relations staff and Took Quayle Seriously. They did so at striking length, in a series of articles that ran in *The Washington Post* last January. Brushing aside criticisms that the series was far too gentle on Quayle, the authors have reissued it, with few if any changes, as a full-length book. "Our impressions of Dan Quayle stem mainly from jokes, cartoons, and the kinds of

stories that often distort our pictures of the very powerful," reads the dust jacket. "But behind this image, he has become a skillful political player, a man who has been repeatedly underestimated." Woodward and Broder conclude, among other things, that Quayle: skillfully campaigned to raise his chances of being selected as Republican nominee George Bush's 1988 running mate; maneuvered tenaciously to win a place in Bush's White House inner circle; and effectively scaled back environmental controls as head of the Council on Competitiveness.

The impact of Woodward and Broder's image-doctoring on other jour-

nalists is difficult to measure precisely, but was considerable. The winds had been blowing toward more favorable news treatment of Quayle even before their series materialized (see "Dan Quayle, The Sequel," *CJR*, September/October 1991). But Woodward and Broder quickened that trend, and, like a balloon filling with helium, Quayle's flaccid image grew firm. Before long, the vice-president had slipped the surly bonds of press ridicule and was soaring above the firmament, hoping to touch the face of greatness. In the weeks after the Woodward-Broder articles first appeared, many more reporters began treating Quayle as a major figure, quoting his utterances with new respect (QUAYLE LEADS ATTACK UPON BUCHANAN, *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, February 29; QUAYLE CRITICIZES NEW YORK AS PROOF OF WELFARE'S ILLS, *New York Times*, February 28; etc.) and writing profiles concluding that he had achieved new stature. Many of these pieces quoted Woodward and Broder's earlier work as evidence that the vice-president indeed deserved sober attention. (See, for instance, Reuters, June 17, DAN QUAYLE, LONG DERIDED, TURNS INTO CAMPAIGN HEAVYWEIGHT.)

By last May, Quayle was being taken seriously enough by the press that his speech attacking the *Murphy Brown* show — for supposedly glorifying unwed motherhood — actually launched a national debate of sorts, and in the next month Quayle's name made the headline in nearly 500 articles in major newspapers. Not all the post-*Murphy Brown* citations were favorable, to be sure, but they did indicate Quayle was controlling the issues in a way that would have been impossible if he were still being dismissed as a national joke.

But, as *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz recently pointed out, there is a law that operates as inexorably in political reporting as it does in physics: what goes up must come down. In June, the ascendant Quayle developed a slow leak after he instructed a pupil in a school spelling bee to spell potato with a "e," provoking a vigorous jab of media ridicule. Just as he appeared to be patching up that hole, Quayle suffered other punctures. He provoked a new round of bad press after

Could this normally humorless team actually be offering us a subtle form of satire?

appearing to reverse his staunch anti-abortion stance, saying on *Larry King Live* that he would support his daughter if she opted to have an abortion. Meanwhile, with Ross Perot out of the race and Bill Clinton surging far ahead of Bush in the polls, a good many top Republicans began leaking to news organizations their belief that Quayle should be cut loose from the ticket.

At the time *CJR* was going to press, Bush was still standing by his Dan.

Not so the press pack. "Dan Quayle is a drag on Bush," reported Richard Morin, *The Washington Post's* director of polling (July 26), citing survey data suggesting that Quayle could cost Bush a close election. *The New York Times* ran stories (e.g., July 23, 25, both page 1) suggesting the veep's political position was very weak indeed. Just three weeks earlier, the *Times* had declared in a July 5 Sunday magazine cover article that "Quayle's Moment" was at hand. That piece, which acknowledged the surge the vice-president aides thought that he got as a result of the *Washington Post's* Quayle series, was one of the most prominent by-products of Woodward and Broder's helium factory.

Of course, even before the Quayle balloon began to sag, critics had been taking Woodward and Broder to task for what they perceived as a soft reporting job that inflated Quayle's strengths while underplaying his weaknesses. Some detractors went so far as to suggest that an underlying motivation for the project was to curry favor and open channels of access to someone who could become an accidental president at any moment. Critics also pointed out that Woodward and Broder ignore some embarrassing Quayle episodes. For instance, while reporting that Marilyn Quayle has a great deal of influence on her husband, the authors make no men-

tion of her adherence, or one-time adherence, to the teachings of Robert Thieme, Jr., a controversial Houston minister who has reportedly preached that the United Nations, among other organizations, is in league with Satan. (Such details would seem to be relevant. Consider the recent press focus on how Hillary Clinton's legal philosophy and liberal views could be influencing her husband.)

Although *The Man Who Would Be President* does include a good deal of unflattering material about Quayle, many readers are likely to come away with a generally favorable picture of him — the book stretches to achieve this effect, at least on the surface. Most of the favorable quotations come not from detached independent observers but from friends and allies, including his wife, who at one point proudly declares, "He makes things happen." (In fairness, the book also suggests a darker side of the Marilyn-Dan relationship. It describes her ordering an aide to remove a photograph of Quayle from his office wall, objecting that it made him look fat, then obliterating his image with a felt pen and kicking the framed picture across the floor.) The book does not skimp with observations about what a decent guy Quayle really is. And it even strives to justify Quayle's much-derided golf fixation — in an overwrought section about how golf is supposedly "key to understanding the vice-president," how his tenacity and competitive drive in the political world are tied, in some mystical, Zen-like way, to his perfectionism on the links: "'After an evening appearance that did not go as well as he wanted....,' one aide said, 'I have seen him, in the dark of night, jump out of his car and walk right to the putting green and start putting. The imposition of discipline. Or absolute order. What matters. And that's not just relaxation. That's his version of Oriental shadow-boxing.'" Quayle's p.r. staff must have been particularly pleased with this passage.

In promotional appearances, Woodward and Broder have been, while not uncritical of the vice-president, certainly more charitable and chummy toward him than one might have expected two supposedly tough reporters to be. Consider these excerpts

from CNN's May 7 *Larry King Live*:

Broder: We traveled with him everywhere that he went. We got to be virtual insiders on his staff....

Woodward: ... David and I found a basic midwestern decency. This guy does not have the demons running around his head or his heart that, say, a Richard Nixon did or a Lyndon Johnson did.

Larry King: In other words, he doesn't hate?

Woodward: He does not hate. He does not hate ...

King: Would you say his word is good?

Broder: Yes, I think it is ...

All very heartwarming.

But when you cut to the essentials, what are Broder and Woodward really saying about Quayle? According to political scientist William Schneider, all they are saying is that Quayle is "not a drooling numskull." By this reading, Quayle not only can feed himself unaided and speak when spoken to but he actually possesses real political skills, and news coverage of him should consequently go beyond ridicule. Fair enough.

But if this is the authors' point, did it really have to be made in a massive, seven-part series? Wouldn't one forty-inch article have sufficed? And did it really require the joint efforts of two of the profession's most high-powered reporters? Because Woodward and Broder devoted such effort to the project, other journalists reacted by taking Quayle a bit *too* seriously, overcompensating for their earlier scorn. Yes, Quayle's efforts to undercut environmental regulations with his Council on Competitiveness have been effective (as Democrats admit) and deserve to be reported. And when a vice-president says controversial things, they, too should be covered. But American news organizations do not seem to be able to do anything in moderation, and last summer's spate of Quayle-has-arrived stories is a case in point.

They seem especially excessive when you consider that there is another possible interpretation of Woodward and Broder's work. Could this normally humorless pair actually be offering us a subtle form of satire? That would certainly put the above-quoted golf sequence in a different light. And in many other sections, their presentation

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WILL MEDIA DECIDE?

THE SPOT

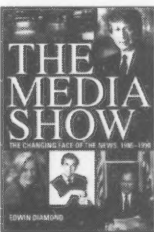
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Gloria Cooper, Managing Editor
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700 Journalism Building
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can be interpreted as a spoof of a behind-the-scenes political profile, a send-up of Quayle's true qualifications.

Take the authors' great emphasis on just how "in-depth" their reporting was. They restate several times that the job took six months and entailed more than two hundred interviews, including twenty with Quayle himself. Yet, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, there isn't much *there* there in the final product. This material really had to be stretched to make it book-length, with the help of lots of pictures and some very wide margins. Anyone with normal reading speed can breeze through the book in an hour or so; one comes away, after finishing it, with no sense whatsoever of any inner depths of Dan Quayle.

Are Woodward and Broder going to such elaborate lengths simply to underscore just how shallow the vice-president really is — to provide what amounts to a wry "three dimensional" portrait of a figure whose third dimension is often hard to discern? There is, in fact, material in the book that can be construed to support such an interpretation: tucked between sections on Quayle's purported attributes are quotations from aides and observers raising doubts about his analytical gifts and concerns about his heavy dependency on wife and staff; observations that Quayle seems to have drawn no cogent lessons from the major conflicts of his formative years — civil rights, Vietnam, and Watergate. There are direct quotations that may suggest little is lurking behind that callow forehead. For instance, when asked to summarize major themes from Paul Johnson's *Modern Times*, a book he said had been very meaningful to him, the veep is depicted babbling helplessly ("It is a very good historical book about history," etc.). The authors suggest that Quayle might have a reading deficiency (which would help explain "potatoe").

Whether Woodward and Broder intend the book as a serious, balanced presentation or as a more sardonic work, it is rather embarrassing that the end product goaded other journalists into treating Dan Quayle as a full-fledged political heavyweight. The fact that it did suggests that we in the news business might have a reading deficiency of our own.

...RIGHT BACK WHERE WE STARTED FROM

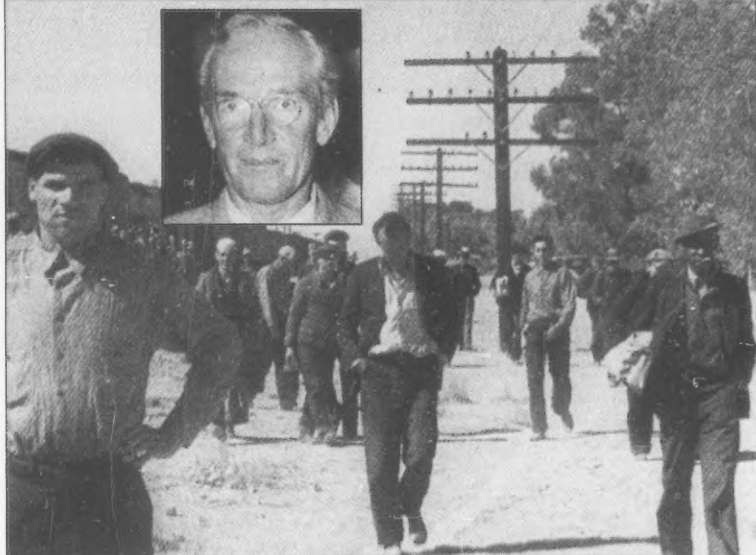
BY CURT GENTRY

Upton Sinclair's surprise victory in the California Democratic primary of 1934 frightened the California business establishment — and the California press lords — as did nothing before or after. A longtime socialist, Sinclair was the author of dozens of muckraking books, the best known being *The Jungle*, an exposé of the meat-packing industry. But it was one of his numerous pamphlets, *I, Governor of California*, and *How I Ended Poverty*, that thrust him into the political spotlight. In the midst of the Depression, his EPIC (End Poverty in California) plan drew a huge grass-roots following. Sinclair advocated having idle factories turned into cooperatives and manned by the unemployed; public ownership of utilities; special taxes on large land holdings; and — the clincher that brought Standard Oil of California, banks, insurance companies, realtors, and the major movie studios into the fray — a state income tax on corporations.

The campaign that followed has been described by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., as "the first all-out public relations blitzkrieg in American politics." Realizing that too much depended on the outcome of the election to entrust it to the state's feeble Republican party, business and industry leaders banded together and hired outside help.

In northern California, it was Clem Whitaker's new firm, Campaigns, Inc. (later Whitaker & Baxter). Whitaker believed a defensive campaign wasn't

Curt Gentry is a former journalist and the author of thirteen books, including The Last Days of the Late, Great State of California and J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets.



University of South Carolina Newsfilm Library

worth waging. Therefore he almost totally ignored his own candidate and concentrated on attacking Sinclair, making the most of an embellished Sinclair statement: "I expect half of the unemployed in the U.S. to flock to California if I am elected."

In southern California, an ad agency, Lord & Thomas (later Foote, Cone & Belding), was, for the first time, given charge of a major political campaign, that of Sinclair's chief opponent, the lackluster Republican governor, Frank F. Merriam. Among Lord & Thomas's pioneering firsts were soliciting out-of-state financing; directing a sophisticated

Thalberg's movie short on the "bums' rush" to California — filmed with Hollywood extras — set out to destroy Sinclair (inset)

visually. *March-of-Time*-like shorts — *California Election News* and *The Inquiring Cameraman* — produced by MGM's Irving Thalberg, played between features at local cinemas. As Mitchell notes, "An almost palpable stink drifted from the screen whenever a Sinclairite appeared." Most in fact were movie extras; some of the scenes of the "bums' rush" to California appeared to be out-takes from feature films.

But even more important was the role of the press.

California's most powerful publisher, in terms of circulation, was William Randolph Hearst. Even if they had been able to ignore their philosophical differences, there was no question of Hearst supporting Sinclair, not after the candidate stated that one of the reasons he was running for governor was because he was sick of watching "our richest newspaper publisher keeping his movie mistress in a private city of palaces and cathedrals, furnished with shiploads of junk imported from Europe, and surrounded by vast acres reserved for the use of zebras and giraffes." Yet the Hearst papers were relatively fair to Sinclair, reserving most of their vitriol

**THE CAMPAIGN OF THE CENTURY:
UPTON SINCLAIR'S RACE FOR
GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA AND
THE BIRTH OF MEDIA POLITICS**
BY GREG MITCHELL
RANDOM HOUSE, 665 PP. \$27.50

direct mail campaign, targeting such groups as doctors, Catholics, and Stanford alumni; and the airing of a series of anti-Sinclair radio soap operas. (Lord & Thomas had some experience in this area, having created the immensely popular *Amos 'n Andy*.) The firm also used more conventional techniques. As Don Belding later admitted, "We hired the scum of the streets to carry [EPIC] placards through the cities." Led by Louis B. Mayer, the motion picture studios for the first time set out to destroy a political candidate,

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for the editorial pages.

(One notable exception was an unattributed bums/boxcar photo that appeared in the *Los Angeles Examiner*. Sharp-eyed movie fans recognized it as a scene from the movie *Wild Boys of the Road*. The still print had been provided by the MGM publicity department.)

"Fairness" hardly characterized the efforts of Hearst's leading competitors. Kyle Palmer, the political editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, raised funds and wrote speeches for Governor Merriam while directing the paper's coverage of the campaign. Chester Rowell, editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, drafted Merriam's platform, while Earl "Squire" Behrens, the paper's political editor for four decades, would later admit that he had personally developed and "used as straight news items, anti-Sinclair statements from leading Democrats."

The *Los Angeles Times* didn't keep its political bias a secret. Every day the paper carried, on its front page, a box of "Sinclairisms." Sinclair on the sanctity of marriage: "I have had such a belief ... I have it no longer." On religion: "a mighty fortress of graft." On bankers: "legalized counterfeiters." On the American Legion: "riot department of the plutocracy" and conductors of "drunken orgies." Nearly all of the quotes were out of context; some of the most inflammatory were actually dialogue from characters in Sinclair novels. As the candidate himself told a journalist, if he lost it wouldn't mean that socialism had failed, only that he had written too many books.

Sinclair lacked the support of a single daily newspaper. Nor did he obtain much help from the many small but influential weeklies, some 700 in all, since Clem Whitaker, himself a former journalist, had established a "cozy relationship" with their publishers. According to Mitchell: "Besides his Campaigns, Inc. operation, Clem ran an advertising company in Sacramento and he had discovered that one operation benefited the other: it was amazing how much free coverage for his candidate he could secure simply by placing a few dollars' worth of advertising in each of the weeklies.... In a depression every few dollars mattered." Lest there be any

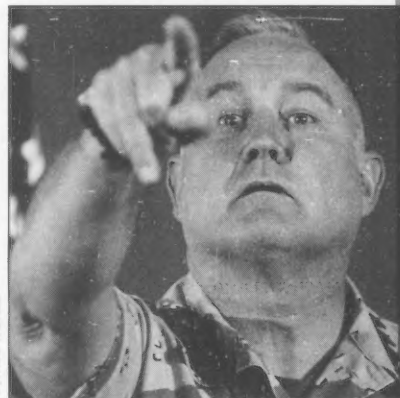
doubt of his purpose, he insisted on paying for the ads in advance.

Late in the campaign, *The New York Times* sent Turner Catledge out to report on the strange goings-on in California. Scanning the *Los Angeles Times*, he saw stories on Governor Merriam's every appearance, but no mention of EPIC rallies or speaking engagements by candidate Sinclair. At dinner that night he queried the paper's political editor, Kyle Palmer. "Turner, forget it," Palmer replied. "We don't go in for that kind of crap that you have back in New York — of being obliged to print both sides. We're going to beat this son-of-a-bitch Sinclair any way we can. We're going to kill him."

Beat him they did, though only by 200,000 votes, Merriam receiving 1.1 million, Sinclair 900,000. But kill him they didn't, although the EPIC movement itself, divided by factionalism and ironically even some Red-baiting, was assimilated into the newly resurgent Democratic party. Earlier, Sinclair had told one EPIC crowd that if they elected Merriam they would still have poverty and "I'll again be a writer. I won't need to think about what Pasadena thinks of me. I can go back to that blessed state of not being recognized on the streets." His first effort, of course, was a pamphlet entitled *I, Candidate for Governor of California, and How I Got Licked*. Returning to fiction, he wrote the highly popular Lanny Budd novels, one of which won him a 1943 Pulitzer Prize; remarried at eighty-three; and died, in 1968, at ninety. No one has ever been able to determine exactly how many books and pamphlets he published.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the campaign of 1934 was the last hurrah for the California press lords, the beginning of the end of their dominance of the electoral process. (Kyle Palmer, Earl "Squire" Behrens, and their successors would play kingmakers for another two decades, giving us, among others, Richard Milhous Nixon.) But the seeds were planted — professional full-service campaign management, attack ads, the creative use of film, radio, and direct mail — that would, as author Mitchell notes, forever change the way candidates ran for office.

SHORT TAKES



AP/WIDE WORLD

THE GENERAL'S GROUPIES

Before the White House Correspondent's Dinner began I struggled down the densely packed corridor past the various newspaper parties, searching for the vortex of power.... An energy beam seemed to be pulling me toward the end of the hallway, and I quickly decided that must be where the action was. I arrived at last at a dead end and found a suite with a sign out front that announced: "U.S. News party — By Invitation Only." ... I had crashed many events in my years as a reporter and I knew I had to crash this one, for here was surely the center of media power on this glittering evening....

In the middle of the room, bathed in a riot of photographic flashes, was the massive, beaming, larger-than-life General H. Norman Schwarzkopf. Hero of Desert Storm; celebrity of the moment; contender for *People's* Sexiest Man Alive; coarchitect of Desert Muzzle. Schwarzkopf appeared to be swimming in the adulation that swirled around him as he smiled for the cameras and signed autographs.

By the general's side — below him may be more accurate — stood the lucky host, Mortimer Zuckerman, the real-estate man turned owner and editor of *U.S. News & World Report*. Zuckerman had scored a tremendous publicity coup by snaring Schwarzkopf for his party as well as for the *U.S. News* banquet table. What price — financial or spiritual — Zuckerman may

have paid for the honor was not known. What was known was that Zuckerman had refused to waffle on censorship and had actually *endorsed* it. In the French vernacular of his native Montreal, Zuckerman had become *un vendu*....

It was a disturbing scene. Reporters and publishers were paying homage to a general who clearly despised the press, to the representative of an administration that had succeeded in relegating them to almost complete compliance with its propaganda aims. The Fourth Estate was bowing to a man who had treated it with contempt normally reserved for enemy soldiers.

Something even more distressing was shortly to follow. Into the room strode the only well-known reporter who had maintained an image of independence from the Bush administration during the war: Peter Arnett of the Baghdad dateline. Arnett walked up to Schwarzkopf, into the limelight, and vigorously shook the general's giant hand: "Congratulations, General, on a very fine effort," he said. "I know you didn't mean all those things you said about me." Then, like any media-trained celebrity, Arnett tossed a quip to the assembled guests: "He tried to kill me," he joked, gesturing at Schwarzkopf. The general said nothing, but continued smiling.

I stood around a few minutes longer, absorbing the conversations around me. At last Schwarzkopf, Zuckerman, and their entourage moved out in a convoy of regal splendor. Small knots of people stayed on to gossip. "Maureen Dowd [of the *The New York Times*] was here," said one delighted *U.S. News* staffer, as if that capped the success of the party.

Just before I left, I eavesdropped on a conversation among four people I assumed were journalists. One man was eagerly recounting the action to the others.... The storyteller suddenly observed me taking notes and asked abruptly: "Hey, do you work for the government?" I mumbled that I didn't and walked out of the room. I should have asked the same question of him.

FROM SECOND FRONT: CENSORSHIP AND PROPAGANDA IN THE GULF WAR, BY JOHN R. MACARTHUR. HILL AND WANG. 260 PP. \$20.

WHAT THE CHICKEN WROTE

Horace Greeley had terrible handwriting — the world's worst. Only one compositor on the *New York Herald Tribune* could read the editor's scrawl. This old hand did not let anyone else set the daily editorials. One day, the other printers became tired of the old hand's constant boasting. They went out, found a young chicken, and brought it back to the composing room. The men dipped the chicken's claws into the ink pot. Then, they let the chicken walk all over a page of Greeley's foolscap (paper size 13 1/2 by 17 inches). They gave this marked foolscap to the old compositor. It did not faze him. He just stood proudly at his case, read the chicken claw marks, and set the type for a thundering editorial on slavery. Greeley never let on that he smelled a joke. But the printers ragged the old hand about his reading skill. Finally, the laughter got to the old hand, and he quit.

FROM THE LOST WORLD OF THE CRAFT PRINTER, BY MAGGIE HELTZBERG-CALL. UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS. 227 PP. \$24.95



WIRED PROSE

I unfolded a copy of the memo we just got from Hampton. It was from Al Perrault, the executive editor, announcing a style change:

It will now be the practice of every reporter and editor at the *News-Dispatch* to name the day of an event or action in all news stories at the very beginning of the sentence in which the event or action is described. Example:

"The police Tuesday arrested nine drug dealers."

Many of you are accustomed to a sentence in which you would say "The police arrested nine drug dealers Tuesday," which you will no longer be accustomed to at this paper. Instead of writing a sentence such as "Authorities say they received numerous reports of dairy cattle found dead with their reproductive organs missing or mutilated Friday," you will write "Authorities Friday

received numerous reports," and so on. The new style, long ago adopted by the wire services, lends immediacy to our reporting.

Immediately I wrote a note on my computer to Perrault:

Dear Al Perrault: I today got your memo on the style change. I tomorrow will begin using it in all stories, although possibly I today should start. Never tomorrow put off until today what you can do.

To make sure he didn't get my note, I deleted it, then looked over at Rebecca and said, "Did today you see our new style change, Rebecca? I today don't intend to follow it."

"Shut up," she advised me.

FROM BEGIN TO EXIT HERE: A NOVEL OF THE WAYWARD PRESS, BY JOHN WELTER. ALGONQUIN BOOKS OF CHAPEL HILL. 302 PP. \$16.95

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Plans of New York State

The Lower case

Women get high-profile roles at convention

Oldest survivor of Titanic sinking

Chicago Tribune 6/15/92

Taylor's crack was an apparent reference to Vice President Dan Quayle's misspelling of "patato" last month. He told a youngster at a New Jersey spelling bee contest to add an "e" to the word.

New York Post 7/21/92

Congress votes for running trains over union workers

Journal and Courier (Lafayette, Ind.) 6/28/92

Man wearing scuba gear improperly dies while diving

The Oregonian 7/27/92

Missing man feared dead; suspects mum

Oakland Tribune 7/21/92

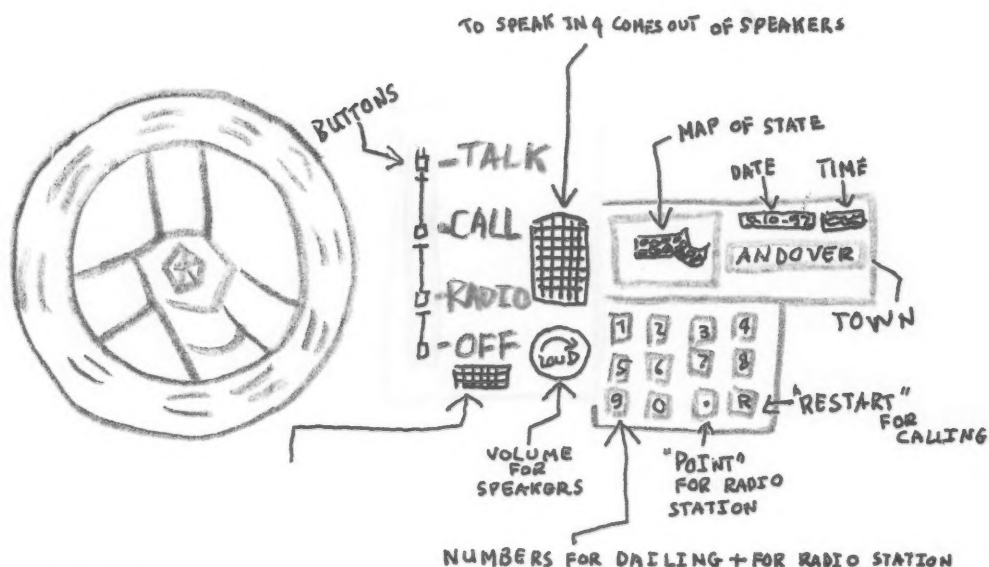


San Antonio Express-News 7/13/92

Jersey City cop trips under scrutiny

The Jersey Journal (Jersey City, N.J.) 6/10/92

IF KIDS' IDEAS WERE DRIVING COMMUNICATIONS



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Grade 5, Bancroft School,
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T. C. R.

(TALK CALL RADIO)

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